



Personal branding

Personal branding describes the process by which individuals and entrepreneurs differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd by identifying and articulating their unique value proposition, whether professional or personal, and then leveraging it across platforms with a consistent message and image to achieve a specific goal. In this way, individuals can enhance their recognition as experts in their field, establish reputation and credibility advance their careers, and build self-confidence.

Personal branding typically begins with establishing an inventory of core competencies, expertise, demonstrated abilities, and existing level of recognition, informed by market research or feedback. Questions to be answered revolve around who needs to know about you, what need are you best-positioned to fill, and what differentiates you from others in your field or space?

Personal Branding consists of three elements:

- Value Proposition: What do you stand for?
- Differentiation: What makes you stand out?
- Marketability: What makes you compelling?

Here are a few tips on honing the appearance aspect of your personal brand:

1. **First impressions count.** Clothes, hair, makeup, teeth.....they're all a part of first impressions. Your client's first impression will be hard to shake if it's not a good one. If you are building a brand around yourself, keep in mind that whenever you leave the house, your brand goes with you. This doesn't mean that you can't run out for coffee in your sweatpants on occasion, but if there is an opportunity that you may meet a potential client, you'll want to present yourself accordingly.
2. **Wear clothes that fit.** If you remember only one thing, please let it be these four words. Just remember the last woman you saw wearing a button-down shirt that was too tight and this image alone should be enough to convince you to wear clothes that fit.
3. **Discover your signature look.** Each one of us has unique features and style. What you perceive of as a flaw may in fact make you memorable. Focus on those characteristics that make you unique. Whether it's always wearing a particular accessory (think Bono with his sunglasses) or carrying off an unusual fashion choice (say, the ability to make mismatched clothes work well together), a unique signature to your style will make you memorable. Just be sure that the unique signature is authentically yours.
4. **Be consistent.** Once you've established a style that works for you, stick with it. If you look like a carefree bohemian one day and a buttoned-up businessperson the next, potential clients may perceive you as inconsistent and therefore, unreliable.
5. **What you wear is a costume of sorts.** What does your costume say about who you are? Since it can be hard to be objective about ourselves, [ask for feedback](#) from people who will tell you the truth. While you may think that your relaxed fit cotton casual pants say "approachable and low-key businessman," to someone else they may scream "hopelessly out-of-touch schlemiel."
6. **Match your style to your business.** If you're a tax accountant, you'll probably find a suit and tie to be a more successful look than, say, grunge. There does need to be a certain correspondence between the nature of your look and your occupation. That's not to say that you can't be a flamboyant tax accountant, but chances are, you'll have more success in the entertainment industry than at a Fortune 500 company.
7. **Be authentic.** Since every aspect of yourself contributes to your "brand," it helps to be authentic. A personal brand is quintessential you. So embrace those aspects of yourself that make you unique instead of denying them.