

Do you know how to market yourself?

How do you find the right balance between effective and excessive self-promotion? The answer is personal branding. Thinking of yourself as a brand will allow you to step back and present yourself as an appealing, consistent, value-adding package.



Personal branding

The concept of personal branding was first presented in 1997 by Tom Peters in his article, 'The Brand Called You', in Fast Company magazine.¹ Peters suggested that the most effective way to market yourself is to 'pitch' yourself by defining what makes you different and unique. He also urges people to 'find the power of you' – essentially the quantifiable stature of your success. Are you a leader in your field? Have you had work published in an industry journal? These are fundamental to the strategy of as they are an unbiased benchmark of achievement.

Activity: Create a SWOT

Another method you can use is to create a marketing strategy for your personal brand. When creating your own brand strategy take stock of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats by creating a SWOT analysis. This is a traditional business technique that allows you to recognise where you fit in the greater picture, where you have an advantage over your competitors and where you may fall short in comparison. It also allows you to discover how you can leverage your strengths to create opportunities!

Strengths

Write out a list of your strengths, making sure you include any natural or learned skills you've acquired, and then for each strength list specific examples of your accomplishments, or how you've demonstrated that strength. The process may make you realise you have more to offer than you thought. This means that when the time is right, you'll be able to describe your strengths, or 'unique value proposition', readily and with confidence.

Weaknesses

You need to be aware of your own shortcomings so you know what areas to work on. There's no shame in admitting to a weakness, especially if you intend to improve on it.

Opportunities

Use this category to identify ways of leveraging your skills and strengths, as well as areas for growth and development. When you find relevant opportunities, develop an action plan for pursuing them.

Threats

Recognise future obstacles so you can plan ahead and manage any potential risks or setbacks, and ensure you have a contingency plan. Use tools such as LinkedIn to see who is out there, what skills they have and how they promote them. Take inspiration from others' success stories and methods of personal branding, and use these to generate your own promotional strategy ideas.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities		
Threats		

Keep your personal brand polished by updating your LinkedIn page often and maintaining a consistent and positive professional persona. It's time to put your personal brand into action and start selling brand 'you'.