



Bud Bilanich, *The Common Sense Guy*, is a management consultant, keynote speaker, executive coach, author, and blogger (www.successcommonsense.com). He can be reached at commonsense@PM360online.com.

“Ask yourself, “How do I want others to think of me?”

10 TIPS for Creating and Nurturing Your Personal Brand

BY BUD BILANICH

AS A PRODUCT MANAGER, YOU’RE ALWAYS BUILDING YOUR PRODUCT’S brand. However, if you want to succeed in your life and career, you need to build your personal brand too. Your personal brand is how other people think of you. You need to build and nurture it, just like you build and nurture the brands of the products you manage.

I have branded myself as “The Common Sense Guy.” I help individual people, teams, and entire organizations succeed by applying their common sense. I have built this brand over several years and I do whatever I can to reinforce it every day. This column is one of the ways that I build and nurture my brand. Every month, I will be providing you with common sense ideas on how to develop your career and lead people and teams. Also, I write a blog at www.SuccessCommonSense.com. I post five days a week, Monday through Friday. I end every post with a paragraph that begins, “The common sense point here is...”

Here are five ideas on how to identify and create your personal brand.

- **Take responsibility for your brand and life.** You are the only one who is responsible for your success and making your dreams come true, so embrace this responsibility. Build your personal brand by doing what it takes to succeed.
- **Ask yourself, “How do I want others to think of me?”** The answer to this question is the base on which you will build your personal brand.
- **Ask yourself, “How do other people currently think of me?”** If you’re lucky, how you want people to think of you and how they actually think of you will be pretty close; but there will be gaps in how they view you.
- **Close the gaps between how you want people to see you and how they currently see you.** Do what you must to accomplish this.
- **Consistently act in a manner that reinforces your brand** once you’ve closed the gaps. Do at least three things every day to reinforce your brand.
- **Be direct and truthful.** Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Nothing so astonishes men as common sense and plain dealing.” Astonish the people around you with common sense and straightforward communication.
- **Admit your mistakes.** We all make mistakes, so own up to yours. You’ll gain a reputation as a straight shooter who is honest with himself or herself as he or she is with others.
- **Become widely trusted.** Deliver on what you say you’ll do. If you can’t meet a commitment, let the other person know as soon as you can. Agree on another deadline and then meet it. Keep confidences, avoid gossip, and never embarrass your friends and coworkers by repeating what they share with you—even if it isn’t in confidence.
- **Be visible.** Volunteer for projects inside your company and community. Write a column or opinion piece for your company magazine or an industry publication. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.

Once you’ve created your personal brand, you need to help it grow. Here are five more ideas on how to nurture your personal brand.

- **Become known as a person of high integrity,** as people with integrity succeed. Your reputation is all you’ve got, but remember be true to yourself. Know your values and stick to them. If you haven’t already articulated your personal values, take a few minutes, think about them, and write them down. Review them every week to make sure you’re staying true to yourself.

Promote your personal brand at all times. Remember, everything you do—and everything you choose to not do—communicates your brand. Dress accordingly and handle phone calls, emails, and face-to-face conversations in a manner that enhances your personal brand. You have the power to mold your brand into what you want it to be, as well as how you want people to see it, so give it your all and make it something to be proud of. ○

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