

# WHY YOUR PERSONAL BRAND IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER BEFORE

---

*13 critical mistakes and how to fix them*

PEOPLE WHO ARE  
THE MOST **SUCCESSFUL**  
IN THIS WORLD  
— IN BUSINESS AND  
OTHERWISE — KNOW THAT  
**IMPRESSIONS MATTER**  
IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE.

They know the importance of being consistent with their actions, words, and appearances so that every person they interact with carries away a similar impression. The greatest success stories inevitably involve people who **stand out from the crowd** — people who may or may not have extraordinary talents but — who most definitely know how to represent their capabilities in everything they do.



The greatest success stories  
inevitably involve people  
who stand out from the  
crowd — people who may  
or may not have  
extraordinary talents  
but — who most definitely  
know how to represent  
their capabilities in  
everything they do.

Given the popularity of social sites, networking platforms, bloggers, online publications and the ease of a quick Google search; a personal brand can be more powerful today than ever before. Anyone with Internet access can easily get a sense of your brand by scoping out your reputation and image. This begs the question: **What would that look like to a potential employer, investor or client?**

## OWNING IT

Your personal brand is your reputation, which is defined by your character. Your personal brand is also your legacy; it's the way others remember you through your actions, your expertise, and the emotional connections that you make. Your personal brand shows your authenticity from the inside out.

“A brand is a promise about who you are and what you do that is strengthened every time people connect with you or your business. It's a strategic process of building a positive set of experiences for the people who need to know about you.”  
Personal branding sets you apart because you identify your differences and then learn to use those differences to make yourself memorable.



Having a brand distinguishes you from the crowd by celebrating your individuality and drawing on your unique strengths to offer value to the people you serve. Personal branding is about expressing your authentic self by allowing you to be the person you're meant to be.

But it isn't just some feel-good, self-help mumbo jumbo: It's a strategic process that makes you an active partner in creating the direction of your life. Through personal branding, you find out how to bring more value to your work. You discover how to

identify and communicate your unique promise of value. It helps the people who need

“  
**A BRAND IS A  
PROMISE ABOUT  
WHO YOU ARE  
AND WHAT YOU  
DO THAT IS  
STRENGTHENED  
EVERY TIME  
PEOPLE CONNECT  
WITH YOU OR  
YOUR BUSINESS.**

you to find you. It's never spin, but it is strategic.

**There are some qualities strong personal brands share. They have clarity, consistency, and constancy.** The person owning it knows who they are and who they are not, and consistently communicates his or her brand the same way in all communication modes, be it verbal communication, nonverbal communication, online or face to face encounters, email, texts, or in social media. It is also strong when it is constantly visible to the person's target audience (*Forrest, 2013*).

## TAKING CHARGE

Developing and managing your personal brand requires a unique combination of skill, knowledge, discipline, self-perspective, future-oriented thinking, and tools & techniques in order to make **YOU** stand out from the rest of humanity. If you don't have a powerful and visible personal brand, you are putting yourself at a disadvantage in almost every aspect of your professional, business and personal life. Personal branding has become a requirement for anyone looking to grow their business, get a better job, get noticed by the press, take their career to the next level, build trust and find more fulfillment.

It is the understructure for:

- **CAREER DEVELOPMENT** - Declaring a personal mission and value proposition
- **INCREASED VISIBILITY** and presence within the corporate workplace & the industry
- **CREATING OPPORTUNITIES** for growth within the industry and the employer organization
- **INCREASING SELF UNDERSTANDING** - Maximize your personal effectiveness.
- **DIFFERENTIATION** - Defining relevance in the marketplace
- **WEALTH** - Differentiating yourself from competitors
- **ACHIEVEMENT** - Connecting with your unique value
- **FULFILLMENT** - Overcoming your barriers to success
- **TAKING CONTROL AND OWNERSHIP** - Drafting a solid action plan to realize your goals
- **SELF CONFIDENCE** - Establishing an authentic signature look and style

**Unfortunately, personal branding isn't always straightforward.** Building an effective brand is a journey. It's an ongoing process. It requires consistency and it requires that you create and adhere to a plan. But while the goal is to consistently strengthen one's personal brand over time, the reverse is also possible.

Below are 13 branding mistakes that will sabotage your efforts to build a powerful personal brand. Are you committing any of them?



# 13

## CRITICAL PERSONAL BRANDING MISTAKES (AND HOW TO FIX THEM)

### 1 **THINKING IT DOESN'T PERTAIN TO YOU.**

Whether you're an office worker, a c-suite executive, or somewhere in between, personal branding has a place in helping you take your career to the next level.

Both employers and customers choose whom they work with on the basis of your personal brand just as much as your other qualifications like your degree or work experience. To get interesting assignments and projects or that promotion you have always dreamed of you need to stand out from others. Positioning yourself as a brand is not an ego play, it's maximizing your strengths, identifying and communicating your unique promise of value. It is an increasingly effective way to build your reputation, connect with your audience on a human level, and grow a valuable network.

The question is no longer IF you have a personal brand, but if you choose to guide and cultivate the brand or to let it be defined on your behalf. Your reputation can be curated — and it should be — because if left unattended, you risk letting others define your personal brand rather than defining it yourself.

It's about taking control to help you achieve your goals.

DON'T MAKE THE MISTAKE OF  
THINKING **PERSONAL BRANDING**  
DOESN'T PERTAIN TO YOU.



## 2 PRETENDING TO BE SOMEONE YOU'RE NOT.

The 'fake it 'til you make it' mindset doesn't work anymore.

“

**THE MOST EXHAUSTING THING YOU CAN DO IS TO BE INAUTHENTIC.**

— Anne Morrow Lindberg —

We all know that, without exception, every single successful relationship relies on some element of trust – both inside and outside the world of

work, in every part of our lives. Without trust, strong relationships cannot be built and good business can't be done. At the end of the day, people do business with people and we all feel a lot better if we trust the person we are dealing with.

Leadership is all about trust. And trust, to be genuine, must be earned rather than expected or demanded. In order to be perceived as a leader that followers feel they can trust, they need to have an insight into the real you. People are perceptive and if they think they are dealing

with a facade, they won't really know what lies beneath and it's difficult to trust someone or something you think may not be genuine.

All strong brands are founded in authenticity.

Done right, branding is genuine. Unique. Real. It's not packaging or creating a false image for the outside world. Being YOU is empowering, energizing, attractive, and satisfying. It is the driver that helps you deliver value to your audience. It is the key to successful branding.

**Use your authentic self – your values, passions, and vision – to guide your career and lead your team. You'll become a magnetic “must-have” resource.**

That clarity – that authentic comfort in your own skin – builds a confidence that is magnetic to others. We all know people at work who radiate authenticity and confidence, and we like to be around them. They are natural leaders; they make us feel better and do better. Sometimes being yourself is as simple as taking your passions to work. If you leave what you love at the door, you're incomplete. People sense that you're inauthentic, not because you're playing a role, but because you're not fully you.

”

**IF PEOPLE LIKE YOU THEY WILL LISTEN TO YOU, BUT IF THEY TRUST YOU, THEY'LL DO BUSINESS WITH YOU.**

— Zig Ziglar —



### 3 WAITING UNTIL SOMETHING BAD HAPPENS.

We all desperately want to manage our careers, but the endeavor feels too complex and time – consuming to break into small actions. So we don't do anything, and we feel frustrated and guilty about it. We keep putting it off until we have time. And usually we don't have time until we lose a job, a promotion, become demotivated or simply burn-out. Then our career becomes the priority that captures our time and attention.



**It's easy to neglect one's personal brand, or even the very idea of it but don't wait until you are forced to.**

### 4 NOT ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS FIRST.

Would you ever sit down to market a business when you're still unsure what the product is? Of course not! In our work with executive clients, we find that most are not truly self-aware – even those who are wildly successful. They haven't had time for introspection; it's not a priority for them. They often come to us for coaching on creating or improving their brand communications, increasing their visibility, and enhancing their executive presence, and are surprised to find the internally reflective part of the personal branding process to be the most valuable.

It forces them to take a step back and really get to know themselves, often for the first time. They've come for the "punch line" but find they love the "setup." Be introspective. Understand what truly motivates you.

Your "brand foundation" is made of uniquely defining seminal elements. They are your personality "DNA"; and they are what drive you.

Take time to understand who you are, what drives you, and what ROI value you create when you do what you do.

The people who skip this step and jump immediately to packaging themselves are the ones who end up with forced brands that they can't relate to.

”

**TOO MANY  
PEOPLE  
OVERVALUE  
WHAT  
THEY ARE NOT  
AND  
UNDERVALUE  
WHAT  
THEY ARE.**

**Malcolm Forbes**

## 5 IGNORING OTHERS IN THE BRAND DISCOVERY PROCESS.

When creating a personal brand, you cannot overestimate the importance of external consulting from friends, family, or a professional branding coach. It can be very difficult to see yourself clearly from your own perspective and helps you understand your brand from the outside in.

**Talking your brand out with someone else can help you get a little distance from the narrative you already hold in your own head.**

“

**YOUR BRAND  
IS WHAT PEOPLE  
SAY ABOUT  
YOU WHEN  
YOU'RE NOT  
IN THE ROOM.**

— Jeff Bezos —

This external portrait augments the results of your self-discovery and is used to validate what you learn introspectively. The ideal process of gathering honest feedback from others who touch you in different capacities is the anonymous Reputation Survey and Audit. It allows you to form a true 360-degree portrait of your current reputation and provides insights that you might otherwise not be able to gain about yourself.

A little outside perspective goes a long way because your brand is held in the hearts and minds of those who know you.

## 6 BEING A PEOPLE-PLEASER.

People with strong personal brands usually take a decision after a thoughtful process and stand by it. Personal branding is mainly dependent upon how you inspire your audience and connect with them at a deeper level. However, you should be aware that you will not be able to please everyone.

A people-pleaser usually ends up pleasing no one.

Personal branding is not about being famous; it's about being selectively famous. In looking for your target market, you're identifying your audience: the people who will help you reach your goals.

“

**ABSORB  
WHAT IS USEFUL,  
REJECT  
WHAT IS USELESS,  
ADD WHAT IS  
SPECIFICALLY  
YOUR OWN.**

— Bruce Lee —

You can achieve your goal by owning your market niche — by creating a mini-kingdom where you're the king or queen. When people think of that niche, they think of you. You can minimize or eliminate the competition when you own a niche.

Creating your Personal Brand Profile helps you combine what you know about yourself and what you know about your target market and competition. This document pulls together the various pieces of your personal brand puzzle, allowing you to see the whole picture of who you really are. It helps you make choices in what you want to stand for and what you want to be known for.

**If you try to resonate with everyone, you will resonate with no one.**

## 7 ACTING WITHOUT THINKING IT THROUGH FIRST.

In business we spend so much time making business plans, analyzing, SWOTs, defining target markets and objectives. Without it it's unlikely you'll achieve success. But what about our own Personal Business Plan? Many people jump onto the personal branding bandwagon without giving much thought to a strategic goal that will help them execute their plans. Successful branding requires having an executable plan based on your brand strategy. You can achieve this by identifying your

goals and getting to know yourself better by differentiating and discerning the compelling value of your brand. Basically, you will have to establish a brand value before you embark on building it. Do you know where you're going? Are your daily decisions direct routes to goals, or off-brand detours to distraction?



**Whatever your goals are, you should document them, concentrate on them and measure your progress towards them.**

## 8 CHOOSING QUANTITY OVER QUALITY.

Personal branding is not about the number of times you update your social media or the number of articles you write, the amount of business cards you collect or even about the number of LinkedIn connections you make.

Strong brands are constantly evolving narratives of interesting, expert, relevant value that build market

presence, create excitement, and attract opportunities. Strong brands are stories. And their stories transform facts into a good read — powerful, memorable, and actionable. They bring value and tell employers, leaders, teams, prospects and customers what they want to know.

**Strong brands are stories. And their stories transform facts into a good read — powerful, memorable, and actionable.**

## 9 LACKING CONSISTENCY.

Consistency is vital for branding success, which is as true for personal brands as it is corporate brands. You need to speak in a consistent voice, make posts in consistent patterns, respond in a consistent fashion, and remain dedicated to your audiences.

There is importance of being consistent with your actions, words, and appearances so that every person you interact with carries away a similar impression.

**A BRAND IS THE SET OF EXPECTATIONS, MEMORIES, STORIES AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT, TAKEN TOGETHER, ACCOUNT FOR A CONSUMER'S DECISION TO CHOOSE ONE PRODUCT OR SERVICE OVER ANOTHER.**

Seth Godin

Disney® does not make Horror movies, unlikely that Apple® launches poorly designed cheap phones or Starbucks® will open up a high-end culinary restaurant chain. They all stick with a clear vision and what they stand for is reflected in everything they do. “Family”, “Think Differently” and “One person, one cup and one neighbor at a time”.

If you send incompatible messages, those around you will not know what you stand for or what to expect from you. **Steadfastly communicating your unique promise of value through all that you do enables you to greatly expand your success.**

How consistent is YOUR reputation?

## 10 FOCUSING EXCLUSIVELY REMOTELY (ONLINE)

Because personal branding became popular with the advent of social media, many think that it is only supposed to be done online.

A communications mix is not one-size-fits-all, so in addition to those standard communications tools, think about other communications vehicles that can help you remain visible to your brand community, while using your talents, not your weaknesses or dislikes. Aim for a blend that both appeals to you and enables you to reach your audience. The goal is to increase your visibility in a way that you find fun, easy and effective.

**What are your best communication medium(s)?**

**Consider these three broad categories: Writing, Speaking, and Networking.**

Communicate it to the right people.

Focus your effort on your target audience, your ideal clients!



## FORGETTING THAT WE JUDGE BOOKS BY THEIR COVER.

Online, just like in real life, you get one chance to make a good first impression. Your personal brand is not just about what you say it's about what you're showing. But what do you need to put in place to be visually memorable—to develop a strong and consistent visual identity?

In worklife, your LinkedIn photo and profile is your primary ambassador to the world. Like a company's logo, your profile stands to represent a promise of value online. So your only LinkedIn Profile photo is a critical part of your professional brand. The presence or absence of your headshot is the first gesture you send that establishes your perceived identity.

Our head-shot determines (in the subconscious mind of the viewer) who we are. Or, at least who we appear to be. Professional, playful, approachable, honest, present, or, in some cases, have something to hide in the absence of a photo. Avoid selfies, holiday snaps, family pictures, settings inappropriate for business, anything that isn't you or poor quality photos.

Undeniably, LinkedIn is now commonly referred to as a 'Social Network' and is undoubtedly the Facebook of the professional world. But herein lies the difference - it's not for socializing. It's about branding yourself professionally; for colleagues, clients, employers, and prospects.

If you wouldn't hand the picture out to your boss, potential employers, clients or customers, then you probably shouldn't put it on your LinkedIn profile.

**A complete LinkedIn profile speaks volumes about the person's level of professionalism.**



profiles with summaries get **10 times** more views



Use **keywords** that people are searching for and have them in the right places.



have a robust network of at least **500** people.



have a profile **photo** that engages your readers.



have a **100%** complete profile, or something very close to 100%

## NOT BRANDING YOUR DAY.

Whether you're giving a presentation, participating in a meeting, or writing a report, you should never leave your brand behind. Always ask yourself how you can create a brand environment and mindset that connects your brand to every situation you encounter—every meeting, every project, every business trip, every business meal!

Your professional network is the part of your brand community comprised of your prospective clients,

people who influence them, your business partners, colleagues and your employer. Your network provides a way to further communicate your brand message to, and through, these individuals who value you and your work. But, approach is everything.

**Build your network with the goal of supporting others, and you'll be far more successful than if you seek only to serve your own needs.**



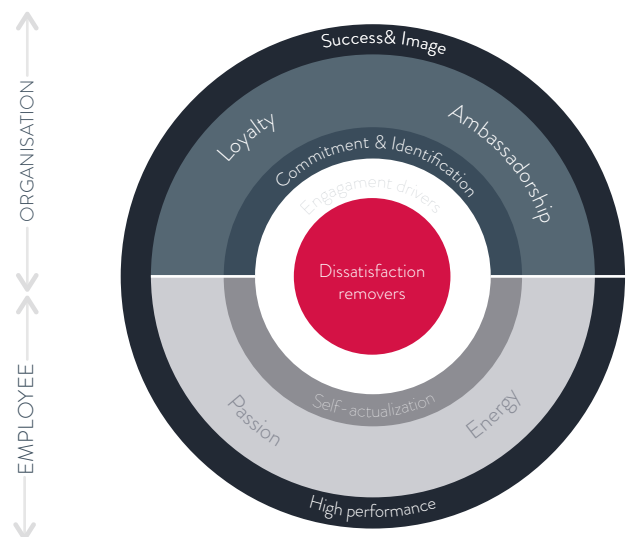
## PERSONAL BRANDING DOES NOT SERVE THE EMPLOYER

Strong brands are constantly evolving narratives of interesting, expert, relevant value that build market presence, create excitement, and attract opportunities. Strong brands are stories. And their stories transform facts into a good read—powerful, memorable, and actionable. They tell employers, leaders, teams, and customers what they want to know. We’ve entered an era of collaboration and information-sharing and transparency, in which every employee has become a touch point. Everyone is responsible for communicating the company’s values, products and services. We are all messengers.” Your company needs you to build your brand! As companies increasingly realize that business is truly a human endeavor, they acknowledge that each employee has an impact on the success of the organization’s brand.

**Every organization should assist its employees—from low-level workers up to CEOs—in becoming brand ambassadors. In this way, they can give the organization a sustainable, competitive advantage while improving reputation, improving employee satisfaction and retention, and, most important, improving reach and visibility.** And don’t think this applies only to external-facing employees like executives, consultants or salespeople; whether they’re in purchasing,

accounting, or the IT department, they, too, have clients. Having a strong brand builds solid connections with these clients—and solid connections are good for business. They create personal engagement and drive employee advocacy.

Investing in employees is crucial to a company, because employees are the company. By investing in their training, empowerment and happiness, you set yourself up for success. Many companies are uncertain of where the lines exist when investing in employees. Some are afraid to go all in only to lose value when employees resign from their posts. What many companies fail to realize is that they could just as easily lose employees to their hesitation to invest in employee well being.



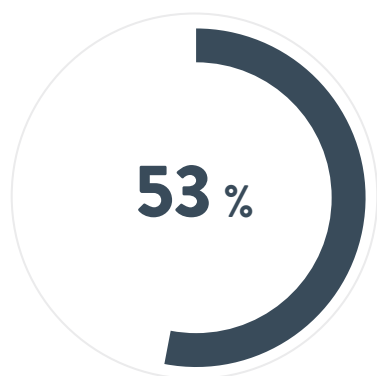
”

**BRANDING ADDS SPIRIT AND A SOUL TO WHAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE A ROBOTIC, AUTOMATED, GENERIC PRICE-VALUE PROPOSITION. IF BRANDING IS ULTIMATELY ABOUT THE CREATION OF HUMAN MEANING, IT FOLLOWS LOGICALLY THAT IT IS THE HUMANS WHO MUST ULTIMATELY PROVIDE IT.**

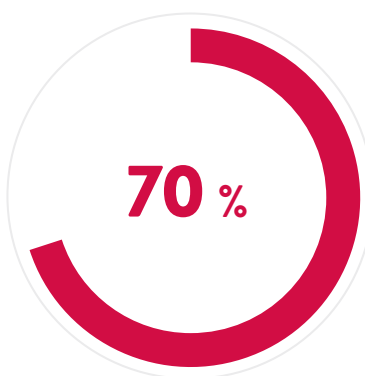
David Aaker



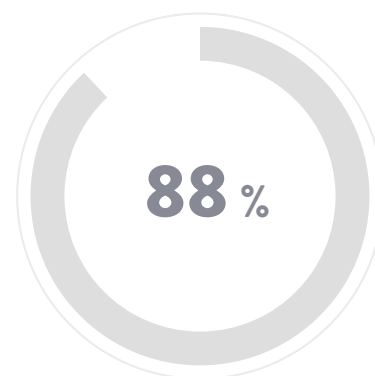
Personal branding has the potential to make lasting change. It is one of the new future job skills that cuts across levels and should be part of the companies Brand Strategy & Culture. A successful implementation needs happen from the Top. Company leaders are leading the brand and they set the example for the rest of the organization.



consideration based on information they did or did not find about an employee online.



of customer brand perception is determined by experience with people.



of people will conduct an online search before a first meeting.

## READY TO PUT YOUR BRAND AT WORK? IN NEED OF A PLAN?

In an overcrowded competitive market it's hard to get in front of key decision makers, prospective clients and employers, so you need to be prepared to present yourself and your unique offering today.

Having a concise branded message about who you are and what makes you or your organisation distinctive is the key to success.

**MPRESSIONS** can help you do just that, using personal branding as a tool.

**MPRESSIONS** helps clients to define who they are and communicate the attributes that make them unique. We give them the tools and strategies to enable them to be seen as credible experts in today's market.

We offer custom executive coaching, workshops, training courses, Brand Ambassador development strategies, Personal Profile Audits & Setup for both individuals as for companies.

# MPRESSIONS

reputation counts

---

## About Mpressions

At MPRESSIONS we believe that we are all Ambassadors (and stand for something). We help companies build more employee-centric ambassador programs.

Call us: +32 474 700 677  
E-mail: [karen@mpressions.be](mailto:karen@mpressions.be)  
[www.mpressions.be](http://www.mpressions.be)

---

## About Karen Verheyden



Karen Verheyden is a true entrepreneur, passionate about what she does as a Personal Branding expert and coach. Enabling professionals define their true values, authenticity, DNA, motivation & vision. She helps companies be successful by turning employees into true Brand Ambassadors.