



## Why you need a personal brand

Establishing a personal brand should be as important to you as creating a consumer brand is to a company. For Business2community.com, Genia Stevens examines the significance of personal branding and suggests why you should establish yours.

- **It will show your value.** A personal brand can help you advance in your career because it shows off your value to the company. Establishing a strong brand will help you answer these questions: Who am I? Why am I an asset? Why am I part of the team?
- **Online behavior influences brand.** Your brand message is more than in-person behavior; it also accounts for online behavior. Behaviors in emails, social media, comment threads, etc., will affect how others perceive you.
- **Use a career coach for branding strategy.** If you have trouble pinpointing your brand, a career coach may help you identify your goals and create a strategy to achieve them.
- **Rebrand after a misstep.** After a major mistake, rebranding is still possible; the time required will depend on the magnitude of the error. While rebranding you should ask who you want to be, what personality do you want to convey, and what type of behavior will you engage in?

— Adapted from “Strong Personal Branding Key to Successful Career Advancement,” Genia Stevens, **Business2community.com**.

## A CEO's advice for aspiring women

Kate Brodock, co-founder and CEO of Women 2.0, a global brand for women in technology, has learned a few lessons she'd like to pass on.

“Firstly, say *yes* more,” she says. “Research suggests that, even at the stage when women are browsing job roles, they disqualify themselves from positions because they think the position is too high for them. We can’t be doing this to ourselves. Know your skills and be confident in your ability to bring them to a job.”

Second, she recommends finding both a mentor to counsel you and a sponsor to support you. While the mentor is there to counsel you privately, the sponsor’s job is to act as your public-facing advocate and to step up and stake their own reputation on your success.

Third, know what you're up against: pay gaps, unfavorable policies and microsexism, which she defines as the ways people will hold you back unknowingly, falling prey to biases internalized over the years. Then equip yourself to fight all these things.

"Early in my career, I went through the classic situation (what I now understand to be classic) of bringing a strategic idea to the table multiple times, only to be summarily ignored and watching as a male colleague brought the same idea to the table a week later and was praised," Brodock recalls. "I couldn't understand what was happening at the time; but had I been aware of this unconscious bias, I may have been able to do something about it."

Fourth, "most obviously, get in there, get your hands dirty, do the best work you can and keep making progress." If your progress isn't recognized, make it recognized or move on. The most important lesson is not to focus on "career." Look at opportunities and decide whether they're good for you based on your interest, ability, potential to advance your skills and whether the compensation will support you.

— Adapted from "Women in Business Q&A: Kate Brodock," Laura Emily Dunn, The Huffington Post.

## Sell your ideas to senior executives

Having great ideas isn't enough. You must be able to successfully pitch them to senior managers. *Win their support with these tactics:*

- **List** your specific recommendations. Use that list to keep the discussion on target.
- **Practice.** You want to sound conversational, and while you don't have to be perfect, you do need to be professional. Stumbling over words and losing your place won't cut it.
- **Open** with your conclusions. Don't make a senior-level audience wait to discover why you are meeting.
- **Describe** the benefits. What will the organization gain if the executives adopt your recommendations? Address that question in detail, tying the benefits to your organization's mission and goals.
- **Specify** the costs. Don't skip over the financial impact, and frame it in a positive manner. Highlight the return on the investment, or show how not following your recommendations will cost even more.
- **Look** everyone in the eye. People who look others in the eye when talking are more believable and persuasive.
- **Be brief.** The less time you take to deliver your message, the better. Shorter is more memorable.

— Adapted from "Selling Yourself and Your Ideas to Senior Management," Patricia Fripp, Contract Management, [www.ncmahq.org](http://www.ncmahq.org).

## Turning an introvert into a 'connector'

If the thought of mingling with a crowd of strangers makes you break out in a cold sweat, you're not alone. But Sacha Chua, an enterprise 2.0 consultant, believes you don't have to be an extrovert to network well. She even created a presentation geared toward "shy connectors" that's spreading virally on the web.

"Change your perspective," she says. It's not a popularity contest. "[Networking] is not about selling yourself; it's about helping others, learning and sharing."

Chua's tips:

**Give people reasons to talk to you.** For example, blog about your interests. Other people will talk to you because you know something they want to learn, Chua says.

**Look for ways to help.** Ask good questions that draw people out and make them think. Recommend books and web sites that help people learn. "As you learn more and as you meet more people, you'll put the pieces together," she says.

**Assign yourself homework.** After a conversation, write down as much as you can remember in a small notebook or the back of a business card. Did you promise to follow up with a link or resource? Do it. "Remember, you're not selling yourself, you're helping people and learning along the way," says Chua.

**Make it easy to get to know you.** When you help others, they'll want to know and help you, too. So make it easy for them to find and know you: include URLs or keywords on your business card, blog about your interests, and use LinkedIn to keep in touch.

**Keep practicing.** "The more you think, listen, speak and write, the more you figure out who you are, what you want to say, why it matters and how you want to say it," Chua says. "And the happier you'll be."

## How to sell yourself with no experience

*by Kim Bassett, President and CEO, Steward Norwood Hospital, Massachusetts*

The hardest part of any job search is selling yourself. Even when you have years of experience in an industry this can be a challenge. How do you package your skills when you do *not* have experience?

1) **Use the job description terminology.** Spend time really reviewing the opportunity. Hone in on the keywords within a job description. A human resources department is specifically looking for those keywords in your cover letter and on your résumé.

2) **Create experience.** I don't mean lie. Never lie. However, do look at your existing experiences and reorganize them to line up on your résumé with the requirements for the job. For example, if you are a recent graduate, look to projects you did in school that qualify you for some of the areas on the job description.

3) **Research the company.** Learn as much about the position and the company as you can. Go online. Stop by the company and take a look around. Know something about the leadership. Think about what you have in common with the company and why you would be a good fit for them.

4) **Research yourself: Dive deep on Google.** Google yourself and be sure your digital image is clean. The last thing you need is for a prospective employer to find that picture from last Halloween of you doing a keg stand.

5) **Build your profile on LinkedIn.** This is the perfect platform to showcase your skills and build a positive professional online image.

6) **Be available and flexible.** Making demands on a prospective employer when you have no experience will not get you far. Be available—work nights, weekends, whatever it takes to get that job. First you get hired and get experience. Eventually, you have the talent and experience to make demands.

7) **Think about references.** Spend time thinking about whom you list as references. Find references that can speak to your ability to do the job. Prep your references. Make sure they know about the job you are seeking and can speak about you in the job you seek.

8) **Listen. Be open-minded.** Because you are just getting started and don't have as much experience, listening is imperative. Through listening you will be able to discern what it is the prospective employer needs and see how/if your existing skillset is a fit for the organization.

9) **Be positive, confident and energetic.** Enthusiasm counts for a lot. Having a positive attitude and confidence in your abilities shows your prospective employer you are eager to learn and do things right.

10) **Don't burn bridges.** Never speak negatively about previous employers or people in the industry. It is amazing how small the world is and how connected people are. As you move through your career, previous employers or people will come and go from your life. You want them to remember the great work you do.

Everyone has to start somewhere. Staying positive, polished and packaging the skills you do have will help you create the best version of you.