

CAREER WARFARE

10 Rules For Building A Successful Personal Brand And Fighting To Keep It

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MAIN IDEA

The true tests of your business career are never quite what you expect them to be. For example, many people assume companies are logical and rational. They think that if they work hard, get good performance reviews and do the right things, their careers will flourish. Then, they watch in amazement as promotions are doled out around them in a cryptic fashion based on bizarre, even whimsical rationale or snap judgements.

So what actually separates those who excel from those who simply plod on? Usually those who get ahead make a name for themselves. They stand out from the masses because they have their own personal brand which is enhanced or diluted by thousands of everyday interactions. Similarly, the organization's collective opinion about whether or not you add value, encapsulated by your personal brand, will have a greater influence on your career path than anything else.

With that in mind, the most single most important thing you can do to further your career is to build your own personal brand or reputation. There are 10 rules for achieving that in practice:

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| The
Ten Rules
For Building
And Keeping
A Great
Personal
Brand | 1 | Always view actions from the perspective of those who judge you. |
| | 2 | Like it or not, your boss will coauthor your brand. Pay your dues. |
| | 3 | Know what type of boss you have and plan accordingly. |
| | 4 | Use good manners to show that you belong in senior management. |
| | 5 | Know when to fight a battle and when to walk away unscathed. |
| | 6 | Reputations are built by daily patterns, not big one-off events. |
| | 7 | At some stage, you'll have to pick a fight with the right enemies. |
| | 8 | Learn how to handle success well, otherwise it can cause problems. |
| | 9 | Realize the higher you fly, the more negative publicity you'll attract. |
| | 10 | Keep building your brand all the time or end up as just another cog. |

Once you realize the real key to success in business is the way you go about building your own personal brand, you then become conscious of how your everyday actions are impacting on the value of your brand. For example, many people go into a business meeting assuming that it is the quality of their presentation that will be most important. What they find, however, is that what really counts is more how they handle themselves rather than what they say. These interactions build a reputation which will be far more important in determining what future opportunities become available than anything else.

In total, you need to be constantly conscious of the personal brand you're building and do something every day that will enhance your brand if you aspire to have a highly successful career.

"Consider how big promotions are really won. I've been in thousands of meetings in which somebody's future was being decided. And it may shock you to learn that in these meetings, there is no big chart where everyone is ranked by merit. It may also shock you to learn that the people who are in a position to actually do something about your career do not think about you all the time. Instead, decisions about your future are likely to be made in the most casual way, after a series of people – or even just one person – expresses an opinion about you. It's like a Rorschach test. Somebody flashes your name. What leaps to mind? Eats peanut butter and liverwurst for lunch? Or has a really unique vision for the business? If you work until you're 65, there will be maybe five or six of these brief moments that will determine how well you're rewarded for your years of effort. The window of opportunity may be narrow, but what's at stake can change your life forever. And an instant assessment of you in one of these moments means more to your career than a foot-high stack of performance appraisals in your personnel file. So you'd better be prepared."

– David D'Alessandro

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