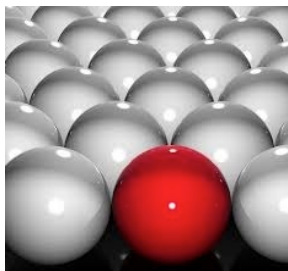


You are who you think you are

Margaret Beaton 23 September 2012

Most of us will readily identify with this statement: *What you say about yourself reflects your innermost beliefs about yourself.* These beliefs include the importance of your role in your organisation, how much you have achieved in your work life, who your friends are, and how successful you have been in your close personal relationships. The statement is true whether you are talking to yourself (self-talk) or talking and interacting with others.

These innermost beliefs and the way they manifest in your talk and activities reflect your 'personal brand'. This post explains why your personal brand is crucial in managing the transitions in your life and why it is a creature of your own thinking. As the title suggests, you are who you think you are. And you can alter who you are by making changes to your inner dialogue.



Personal brand

A personal brand is no different to any other brand. It exists as a set of thoughts and feelings about you in your mind. And in the minds of all who know you. Thus it is your self-image – how you see yourself looking from the inside, and your identity – how others see you looking from the outside.

Your personal brand is therefore the product of your past thoughts and self-talk about your experiences. So if you are seeking to 'Step up' to the next level in your career or to 'Let go' and move to a new phase of your career, you'll need to refresh your personal brand (at least parts of it) to represent the 'new you' that you desire to be.

A strong personal brand is important if you are stepping up, for example into a bigger job, because you need to believe in yourself and project to others the newfound authority this job needs. If you are letting go, for example to become a non-executive director, the benefits of your personal brand make-over will enable your entry into and influence in new circles.

You can craft your personal brand by understanding the 3Cs of strong brands: Clarity, Consistency and Congruence. Clarity refers to the succinctness and distinctiveness of your 'elevator speech'. That is, the way you think about and express to others those aspects of the new you that are important to the changes you are making. Consistency refers to the singularity of your message, so that all the people with whom you come into contact hear and see the message the same way, all the time, every time. And Congruence relates to sending the same message to yourself that you send to others so your personal brand is aligned internally and externally and is self-reinforcing.

Adept application of the 3Cs to the management of your personal brand creates confidence—your own and others'—and assures you come across authentically.

How to build your personal brand

What you have to do to build your personal brand. Firstly, you need to know what you want to be and what you want to do in your future. You have to do the work of self-analysis and be crystal clear about what is and why you want it. This leads you to the thoughts and feelings that represent your internal brand. Then you need to project

the 'new you' to those who are important to you. You need to have your message (elevator speech) ready and rehearsed so you don't stumble and sound unsure of yourself. This projects your external brand.

Brand-building, whether for Apple, for Nike or for you, is a continuous process, not a one-off or series of occasional events. As you interact with your target market listen to how the speech plays, test your conviction to be sure it's what you want and understand how your external projection is working. Refine it over time.

In all of this be true to yourself. Know yourself. Do the work. Match the internal (your own needs and picture of yourself) with the external (market needs and how you meet them) to build a coherent personal brand. And remember, you are who you think you are.

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