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IS THERE BUZZ ABOUT YOU?

The Power of Building a Personal Brand

Who doesn't want to have other people "buzzing" about us? Word of mouth is the most powerful force in business. Even in a complex, global economy—buzz is king. If people like you, respect you and have a good experience with you (or hear about it from someone else) they hire you, promote you and do business with you.

But how do you get people buzzing about you?

Let's look at how big companies do it—Nike, for instance. Everyone recognizes the famous swoosh logo on shoes, hats, shirts and golf bags. That logo has power. But its power was not the result of a multi-million dollar marketing effort.

Back in 1971, a graphic design student at Portland State University named Carolyn Davidson was hired to "just do it"—create a logo for the side of a running shoe. She was paid the princely sum of \$35. Carolyn had a moment of creative genius! It resulted in a symbol that became ubiquitous on Nike gear. Twelve years later the company gave her a gold Swoosh ring embedded with a diamond, along with a certificate and an undisclosed amount of Nike stock. Today the brand is worth more than \$8 billion dollars.

What does that have to do with your personal brand—and the buzz about you? The lesson is that you don't need to have a big budget to build a personal brand! It's about focusing on how to communicate effectively—using your wits. A creative, thoughtful approach to delivering the message will get people saying positive things about you.

To use ingenuity requires you to step back and think strategically. You must put time and effort into how you communicate your message. Your conversations, presentations, emails, phone calls and conversations in the hallway all send signals. Are you talking about big ideas? Are you clear, concise, and interesting? Do people appear to sit up and pay attention when you speak?

To develop a reputation as a powerful, effective professional you must consistently and effectively use verbal and non verbal messaging. Together, they create a package of information that makes a positive, lasting impression.

In **Be Your Own Brand**, David McNally says, “Your brand is a perception or emotion maintained by someone other than you which describes the total experience of having a relationship with you.” People have a feeling about us, almost as soon as they meet and work with us. They continue to shape that feeling with the more interactions we have. Pretty soon, they see us walking down the hall, and something registers, positive or negative.

It’s within your power to make that feeling positive.

What is a strong personal brand? It’s:

- Instantly recognizable
- Stands for something of value
- Builds trust
- Generates positive word of mouth
- Gives you a competitive advantage
- Creates career opportunity
- Results in professional and financial success

Is it important to have a brand? Or can your work speak for itself? You can probably answer that question yourself. How many hard working people do you know who never get the recognition they deserve?

Time and time again, I’ve seen that hard working people miss out on business opportunity. They are overlooked because people don’t know them or have that instantly positive feeling about them. Building a personal brand will help you move out of the trap of toiling away in obscurity to getting the recognition you deserve.

Wherever you are today in your professional life, you can start sending strong, positive signals that will cut through the clutter of day to day business and create buzz about you. It begins with learning how you are communicating and what you need to do to improve.

If you don’t think enough people are talking about you in a positive way, find out why. Seek out a mentor or trusted advisor to tell you what signals you are sending. Encourage them to be specific. Write down what they say and take it to heart. Read books. Ask about coaching or look for workshops and training that will help you develop the communication skills you need.

Each of us has the power to create our own positive personal brand. In fact, you could argue, we must, if we want to succeed in a competitive, global economy. As Tom Peters, author of **In Search of Excellence** once wrote, “If you’re really smart, you figure out what it takes to create a distinctive role for yourself—you create a message and a strategy to promote the brand called you.”