



People who seek admittance to highly ranked MBA or PhD programs; seek employment at or promotion within a prestigious university, company, or government ministry; or who establish their own company or organization are typically quite interested in building an attractive personal brand that will represent them and their work in the most beneficial ways. This is because the ideas that people have about us significantly influence our relationships with them, as well as our access to different human communities.

In essence, a personal brand is composed of all the images, memories, attitudes, and emotions that automatically surface when people hear our name or see our face—most of which they base on the following:

- Our personal appearance (i.e., our clothing, hairstyle, cleanliness, body language, etc.)
- Our linguistic skills and choices
- Our public and private behavior
- Our interests, passions, dreams, and ambitions
- Our possessions (i.e., what we buy and what we do with it)
- Our food (i.e., what we eat and how we eat it)
- Our use of time, money, people, and authority
- Our work and achievements, and the way we talk about them
- Our work and achievements, and the way others talk about them
- Our choice of friends, and the kind of people who find us attractive
- Our responses to difficult people and circumstances
- Our values, perspectives, philosophies, attitudes, and opinions
- Our professional knowledge and what we do with it
- Our professional skills and what we do with them

Companies work hard to build their corporate brands with well-designed webpages, advertisements, products, services, and media coverage; however, personal branding is more challenging because it represents all that people really are, both inside and out. Consequently, **our personal brand will only improve if we improve**. Shortcomings in our thinking, character, or behavior will damage our reputation more than anything else, no matter how hard we try to compensate for them with impressive facades that do not accurately portray who we really are.

If we want to improve our personal brand in mature and effective ways, then we need to carefully reflect on who we actually are, how we express ourselves through all that we say and do, and then work from the inside out to clean up all of the ugliness in our life that we are ashamed of. Some techniques and philosophies work better than others, so be careful to select a path of personal reform that truly works or you will end up wasting precious time and energy on fruitless efforts. For surely, a beautiful reputation, which reflects who we really are, is much more valuable than anything money can ever buy.

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.

Proverbs 22:1 (King Solomon, recorded in the Old Testament of the *Bible*)

The wise inherit honor, but fools earn disgrace.

Proverbs 3:35 (King Solomon, recorded in the Old Testament of the *Bible*)