



Personal Branding For The Sports Turf Manager

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What in the world is personal branding? Your personal brand is the combination of your experience, skills and talents that distinguishes you from others who do the same work as you. This is very important when you are seeking and competing for another job. For those who are not in the job market, leveraging your personal brand is equally, if not more important. It helps you to increase your value to your employer, which results in greater opportunity for compensation and job security.

Like a retail brand, your personal brand encourages those who employ you to trust your ability to deliver quality field conditions within budget and on time. Your personal brand is a promise of what your employer can expect from you, so that when the unexpected happens – weather, pests, equipment failure – your personal brand is what saves you.

It's a given that you do a good job, but if you are not consistently telling or reminding people about the good job that you do, it is not top of mind. Your good work goes unrecognized. This doesn't mean that you brag, but personal branding helps to create a specific plan to gain recognition and respect.

There are six attributes that contribute to your brand – competencies, personality, relationship management, leadership style, strengths, and weaknesses.

Attribute 1. Competencies.

Let's start with competencies. These are the knowledge, skills and abilities that make you unique. Are you certified? Have a well-tooled IPM program? Excellent budget management? Competencies are focused on what you know and how you apply it to your job.

Attribute 2. Personality.

Your personality is another contributing quality. How does it help or hinder your

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personal brand? The key is to look at the positive attributes of your personality. If you are laid back – your ability to remain calm and not get rattled, especially in a crisis is very positive. If you are wound tight, the decisiveness of that attribute will serve you well. Friendly or shy? If you are friendly, your verbal skills can shine and it is easy for others to like you and listen to what you have to say. If you are shy, you could really hone your written communication skills and be known for your

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thoughtful and analytical approach. No matter what your personality – there are positive attributes that you need to define, include in your plan and figure out the best way to leverage them.

Attribute 3. Relationship Management.

You all manage down – staff and crew management – but how well do you manage up? Managing up means that you understand how to meet your boss's expectations. Relationship management also includes your network. Reach out and connect with those outside of your department, at all peer levels. Your brand is also affected by your staff. This includes their attitudes, care of equipment, courtesy to athletes, coaches and fans. As their leader, be sure you create a climate for learning and listening. Be respectful when they speak, and be a cheerleader and a coach. When you help them succeed, you succeed.

Attribute 4. Leadership Style.

Leadership styles are learned. Model the behavior of those whom you admire. You are known by the company you keep. Your friends, your business associates, and your staff all contribute to your brand. Be sure to associate yourself with credible people. Any hint of being associated with someone with poor ethics or morals can cast a shadow on you.

Attributes 5&6. Strengths & Weaknesses.

Finally, your strengths and weaknesses are integral to your personal brand. Of course everyone has weaknesses, and it is important to work on improving them, but spend more time on building your strengths. You aren't trying to change who you are in developing a personal brand strategy, but you won't be successful if you try to be someone who you are not. So how do you identify those strengths that add value? You can use a very simple tool called a feature/benefit model. For the work that you do, there is a corresponding benefit. The

benefits define your value, and your value is your brand. For example, do you deliver your work on time, every time? That's the feature; the benefit is that your employer, athletes and fans get dependable reliable field set up and ready-for-play conditions. What about anticipating problems before they become crises? That's the feature; your employer benefits by saving money and time by having you on their staff.

Promotion.

The next step after you have identified your brand attributes is to promote yourself. The first step is visibility. There is virtually no limit to the ways you can be seen. How visible are you to your athletes, fans and coaches? Do you stay behind the scenes

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and hope that no one asks a question that you need to answer? Or are you front and centre, meeting and talking with people explaining your craft?

There are many other ways to be visible. Volunteer to give a presentation to your management team or at an industry conference. Teach a class at your local community college or start by being a guest presenter. If you are a better written communicator than a presenter, write an article for your facility newsletter or your association. Community newspapers are always seeking materials, so contact an editor and write an article. This sets you up as the expert so that when they need information on water quality, drought, pesticide ban issues, etc., they come to you.

If you aren't a writer or a presenter, you do read! A way to attain more visibility with your employer is send him/her articles of pertinence. Forward them electronically or send a copy with a note explaining why you think the employer would find the information of interest.

Maybe your facility is ready for a field renovation and the article has an excellent check list to be sure all stakeholders are engaged. Look at this as career karma: the more you give the more you get in return.

Bottom Line.

Everything that you do – or don't do – contributes to your brand. Do you return phone calls and emails in a timely manner? Are you on time for meetings? Do you make yourself available to field users for feedback? What does your ring tone say about you? Your brand is substance and style.

Being a sports turf manager, your world is full of projects. Projects are a fantastic way to showcase your brand and enhance your reputation. Projects have delivera-



bles, timelines, budgets, teamwork – all of which, if successfully met, help you to stand out.

You are in charge of your brand. If you don't pay attention to it, no one else will. Personal branding can be the key to your success – however you define success. You have the brand power to set the course for the future you want.

Sources. Career Distinction, William Aruda & Kirsten Dixon; The Brand Called You, Tom Peters.