

Brand YOU! ©copyright by Robert (Bob) W. Lucas

No matter whether you work for an organization or for yourself, it is crucial that you spend conscious effort selling or “branding” yourself. Just as professional marketers work toward gaining name recognition, building trust and establishing their organization as a key competitor in the workplace, so must you, if you plan to achieve personal and professional success.

To effectively promote yourself to others, you must first make an assessment of your strengths or things that you know or do well. Once you have done this, you will be able to better identify opportunities in which you can position yourself for maximum success. A simple way to accomplish this is to write a list of strong points related to your knowledge or performance. Start with things that people tell you they think you are good at and then move to areas that you feel confident in or that you have performed well in the past. With this list in hand, start looking for tasks, jobs, or other opportunities in which you might use your strengths.

Like anything else, branding yourself means managing your behavior and taking advantage of situations where you can gain new knowledge and skills and use current ones. By doing so, you are always ready to grasp new opportunities presented to you. Even so, do not wait for these opportunities to come to you. Instead, continually do environmental scans to search for trends, and situations or issues that would be a good fit with your strengths. Also, look for people who display similar knowledge and skills and observe how they use their talents to succeed and to identify potential markets or places into which you can also venture.

The following are some specific ways that you can potentially enhance your personal and professional brand.

Project a positive image. It sounds logical, but many people forget that they are virtually always “on stage” when it comes to personal appearance. Even if you are off the job (e.g. in a supermarket line, at the post office, or wherever), you must be aware of how you present yourself to others. Informal conversations might uncover the fact that you work for ABC Corporation or for your own company. If you are unshaven, have clothing that is dirty or torn, have hair that is unwashed or otherwise untidy, others may associate your appearance with the quality and reputation of your organization.

Be Punctual. Whether you are going to work, a staff meeting or a personal or professional appointment, always try to build in a bit of extra time and arrive a few minutes early. This is much better than rushing in after the scheduled time. The latter can send a message that you are unprepared, unprofessional or lack personal discipline.

Go to Work. We all have days when we wake up and think, “I really do not feel like going to work today.” We want to hit the snooze button and go back to sleep, but this

would be a mistake. Doing that would mean that someone else might have to pick up your work in order to cover for you and serve customers. This is unfair to them. Instead, make a conscientious effort to be at work on time each scheduled day unless some emergency or your health prevents it.

Be Productive. In a business world where every employee has to carry a larger share of the load because of downsizing and other organizational adjustments, you must often do more than what is expected or defined in your job description. Always be willing to pitch in to help others in the workplace and to do your best when working on a task. The old caution to “give 110%” is crucial for success in today’s competitive environment.

Strive for Improvement. The people who succeed and advance in today’s workplace are the ones who continually strive for personal and professional improvement. Seek to continually upgrade your knowledge and skills by reading, taking online and onsite classes, get a degree, seek professional certifications and do whatever you can to grow. The people who survive downsizing and are able to attain personal and professional goals are the ones who take the time to get better at what they do and improve their knowledge.

Stay Abreast of Industry Trends. Things are changing so rapidly in today’s world that you cannot afford to take time off or get lazy when it comes to networking, attending conferences, and monitoring what is happening in your organization or industry. Spend time and effort talking to subject matter experts, enlisting the assistance of a mentor and talking to other professionals in your field to find out best practices and what successful organizations are doing to maintain a competitive edge. Use what you learn to improve yourself and help better position your organization as an industry leader.

Steer Clear of Negative Thinking. One of the biggest mistakes that many people make in the workplace is that they fall into the trap of listening to negative “group think.” Avoid people who constantly complain, shirk their responsibilities, and complain that “they” never tell us or let us do anything. Such people are destined for the unemployment line or punitive actions by their employers.

Be a Force for Achievement. As the adage “Everyone loves a winner” implies, you can position yourself as a powerful resource by continually thinking creatively and looking for ways to improve on everything. Bosses love people who are forward thinkers and who can analyze the current situation and come up with plausible solutions to problems before they even exist. Look around at your organization’s policies, procedures, products, services and business practices. What can be improved? Once you identify something, research and come up with a proposal to do so. Present your ideas to your supervisor or other appropriate person(s).

These few simple strategies can start you on the way to being recognized as a force with which to be reckoned. By taking a positive, proactive approach to everything that you do, you will soon be on your way to achieving the personal and professional satisfaction and goals that others only wish for.

Bob Lucas B.S., M.A., M.A, CPLP is an internationally-known author and learning and performance professional. He has written and contributed to thirty-one books and compilations. He regularly conducts creative training, train-the-trainer, customer service, interpersonal communication and management and supervisory skills workshops. Bob can be reached at blucas@robertwlucas.com or through his website www.robertwlucas.com. Follow his blog at www.robertwlucas.com/wordpress and like him at www.facebook.com/robertwlucasenterprises