

Check Your Brand

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I always buy the same toothpaste, yogurt and mayonnaise because I like the brand. Maybe you also have favorite brands. My friend is on her third Honda. My husband only drinks Miller Lite. People are loyal to particular brands because of things like their effectiveness, taste, price point and durability. According to Wikipedia, a brand is a name, term, design, or other feature that differentiates one seller's product from those of others. What distinguishes YOU from other colleagues is your brand. Obviously, you want to present yourself in the best light, but there are some things that chip away at your brand. Protecting your brand requires constant monitoring. The points listed below will strengthen and ensure brand loyalty.

- **First impressions matter.** A bad first impression is difficult to erase. Be nice, be friendly. Be genuine. Always show your best self. Work at building relationships with others. Your brand depends on how others view you.
- **Look your best.** You undoubtedly have heard the saying, "Dress for Success," but in today's business casual environment, we often lose sight of what that means. Professional attire varies depending on your occupation and the company where you work. Poorly manicured nails or toes, scrubby facial hair, spotted or wrinkled anything will be noticed and affect your image. What works for an "after hours" event may not be appropriate at the office. A good way to ensure that your appearance is polished is to notice how the Executives in your company dress –and then emulate them.
- **Be crystal clear.** Don't over-talk an issue or connect one thought to another. Let your sentences come to a definite end. Avoid using a lot of acronyms. Resist turning nouns into verbs or vice versa. A simple explanation is always the best bet, but as Steve Jobs once said, "Sometimes, you have to work darn hard to keep it simple."
- **Double check for accuracy.** People really despise mistakes. They are costly. Decisions rest on the data or analysis you provide. Without checking your data for errors or your slides for misspellings, your brand is at risk.
- **Be prepared, be prepared, be prepared.** Managers and Executives can always spot the person who is unprepared. They don't anticipate what will be asked. They forget to bring a vital piece of information. They aren't sure of the risks involved.
- **Follow through.** If you say you are going to provide the numbers by Thursday, then do it. If, for whatever reason, they are not ready, you need to update the person requesting them. Being overloaded with work is not an acceptable excuse for poor follow-up.
- **Listen up.** Listening takes effort, real effort. Most of us listen effectively only about 25% of the time. When we don't listen carefully, mistakes happen or we answer incorrectly. Poor listening skills mar your brand.
- **Don't argue.** Some of us are quick to temper. We blame others for events. It's always somebody else's fault. Accept when you are wrong and learn from your mistakes. It's never good to have a reputation of being feisty.
- **Be a good-finder, not a complainer.** If you work for a company, be proud of what the company does or leave. Don't whine about your managers to co-workers, relatives and neighbors. Unprofessionalism gets you nowhere!
- **Be honest.** Tell the truth every time. Don't gloss over events or hide bad news. People know things can go wrong, but they have little tolerance for someone not being honest or for someone who bends the truth.
- **Look people in the eye.** People assess trustworthiness by whether or not you look them

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in the eye. Having fleeting eye contact is not okay. If you are guilty of reading from a slide or looking at the floor or ceiling when answering a question, you have again damaged your brand, maybe even irreparably.

- **Be helpful.** Some people seem to hang a “Do not disturb” sign around them. Colleagues frequently have questions about a process or a procedure. They need help. Don’t be the person people avoid.

Companies who are in business for a long time have worked hard to perfect their brand. They never risk their image. Your brand is who you are! Guard it. Protect it. Keep a close eye on what you do on a daily basis.

***Question:** What additional things have you noticed that have marred other people’s brand? We’re interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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