

# Developing a Unique Leadership Brand

**A leadership brand conveys your identity and distinctiveness as a leader. It communicates the value you offer. A strong personal leadership brand allows all that's powerful and effective about your leadership to become known to your colleagues, enabling you to generate maximum value.**

What's more, choosing a leadership brand can help give you focus. When you clearly identify what you want to be known for, it is easier to let go of the tasks and projects that do not let you deliver on that brand. Instead, you can concentrate on the activities that do.

So how do you build a leadership brand?

## **1. What results do you want to achieve in the next year?**

The first thing you should do is ask yourself, "In the next 12 months, what are the major results I want to deliver at work?" Take into account the interests of these four groups:

1. Customers
2. Investors
3. Employees
4. The organisation

We advise you to begin by focusing on the expectations of those you are working to serve, rather than on what you identify as your personal strengths. Leadership brand is outward focused; it is about delivering results. While identifying innate strengths is an important part of defining your leadership brand, the starting point is clarifying what is expected of you.

## 2. What do you wish to be known for?

Pick four descriptors/phrases that balance all of the following.

- personal qualities that came naturally,
- unique skills you have gain from your experience and background,
- personality traits,
- insights that your formal education has provided you.

Think about these descriptors/phrases in the context of your current/future role and why they may be critical.

Test your choices by sharing them with your trusted confidant, boss or peers by simply asking them, "Are these the traits that someone in this role should exhibit?" Their responses help to refine your list.

## 3. Define your identity

The next step is to combine these four descriptors/phrases into two sentences that reflect your desired identity. This exercise allows you to build a deeper, more complex description: not only what you want to be known for, but how you will probably have to act to get there. Wordsmithing many combinations that you can make from your four chosen descriptors/phrases help you crystallize your personal leadership brand.

## 4. Construct your leadership brand statement, then test it.

In this step, you pull everything together in a leadership brand statement that makes a "so that" connection between what you want to be known for (Steps 2 and 3) and your desired results (Step 1).

Fill in the blanks:

"I want to be known for being \_\_\_\_\_ so that I can deliver \_\_\_\_\_."

With your leadership brand statement drafted, ask the following three questions to see if it needs to be refined:

- Is this the brand identity that best represents who I am and what I can do?*
- Is this brand identity something that creates value in the eyes of my organization and key stakeholders?*
- What risks am I taking by exhibiting this brand? Can I live this brand?*

## 5. Make your brand identity real

Espoused-but-unlived brands create cynicism because they promise what they do not deliver. To ensure that the leadership brand you advertise is embodied in your day-to-day work, check in with those around you. Do they see you as you wish to be seen? If you say you are flexible and approachable, do others find you so?

After defining your personal leadership brand, share it with others. Let people know that you are evolving as a leader and invite their feedback.

The exercise of forging a leadership brand and the day-to-day discipline of making it real, helps to stay focused on the most important challenges of your role.

To be sure, your leadership brand isn't static; it should evolve in response to the different expectations you face at different times in your career. In our work, we have seen that leaders with the self-awareness and drive to evolve their leadership brands are more likely to be successful over the long term — and to enjoy the journey more.

### *Reference:*

*Dave Ulrich and Kate Sweetman, (2009), The Leadership Code: Five Rules to Lead By. (Harvard Business School Press)*

*Dave Ulrich (2007), Leadership Brand: Developing Customer-Focused Leaders to Drive Performance and Build Lasting Value (Harvard Business School Press).*

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