

# Women at Work: 5 Essentials to Power Up Your Personal Brand

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Despite great strides made in *women's* empowerment and gender equality, women still make up a small segment of top leadership jobs. Successful women understand the power of personal branding. Personal branding is no longer a luxury – it's a requirement whether you have your own business or are climbing the corporate ranks. Everybody has a personal brand – it's either negative, neutral or positive. And although it may seem personal brands “just happen,” they don't – the best ones are carefully honed. Here are five indispensable tips to bring your brand to life:

## **1) Start with a Plan**

Jumping into tactics w/o strategic direction does NOT work. You need to be intentional and proactive. The Discovery phase – a self-audit of your passions, expertise, achievements, values, and goals – is vital for success. But just as important as understanding you is understanding your audience – which may include board members, clients, potential employers, employees, strategic relationships, or the community at large. Define your target audience and arm yourself with intelligence about what drives them to take action. Determine who you're talking to: consider age, gender, personality and profession. Then, identify your audience's pain points: how can you solve their needs? What is their preferred channel of communication? Personal branding is not a matter of *me-me-me*—it's about your value to others. In order to stand out, gather intelligence on your competition. Who

else is doing what you're trying to do? Why should *you* be selected for that coveted position or promotion? Why should someone hire *your company* instead of another? By plotting all this out, you'll crystallize your competitive advantage and be well-positioned to put your stake in the ground.

## **2) Bring Your Brand to Life**

Once you've crafted a compelling brand, you need to create a powerful portfolio to showcase your value. Ensure your LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other online profiles are up-to-date and harmonized – make every word and photo count. You may consider a website, a digital resume, and headshots, to start. You might create other content, too – like customized infographics showcasing your accomplishments. And always ensure you adhere to your Company's brand standards and policies (if applicable).

## **3) Deliver Content That's Relevant (and Platform-Appropriate)**

Think of yourself as your own news channel. Whether you develop articles, blog posts or videos, make certain the content is shareable, engaging and actionable. Humor drives further interaction when used appropriately. And don't forget the "wow!" headline. It's all about delivering value driven content. Good is not enough – you need to create remarkable content to capture your audience. Content is more than words; make use of striking visuals to engage readers. And before hitting the "post" button, take a step back and ensure your post is relevant and relatable. Take into account the recipient's mindset: "What's in it for me?"

## 4) It's All about Relationships

At the end of the day, your network equals your net worth. Your network should be carefully curated – you want your network to include people who are relevant to your goals. People do business with people they like and trust. For this reason, it's important to engage in both online and offline communities. Be transparent: should you receive a negative post or review, address it in a professional and timely fashion. Both prospective and existing clients will appreciate your honesty. Also, invest in networking and actively join committees and organizations (both professional and community) and go beyond just being a member – take a leadership position. Give before you get, and say “thank you” often.

And always, always remember the simple stuff: a firm handshake and prompt replies to those important emails.

## 5) Measure Results to Ensure Success

Your personal brand requires routine maintenance and monitoring to ensure your message is heard loud and clear. You need to assess *What is moving the needle?* Refine your strategy accordingly. Analytics include info on social shares, back links, page/profile views, favorites, retweets, mentions, and LinkedIn Social Selling index.

It's important to note that the work does not stop here: as you progress in your career, you need to adapt and refine your personal brand. But don't fret: it's never too late to start! Here's to jumping in the driver's seat and powering up your personal brand.

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**About the Author:** Stacey Cohen founded Co-Communications, Inc. in 1997, an award-winning full service marketing and public relations firm with offices in Westchester County, NY, Farmington, CT and midtown Manhattan. Stacey began her career at Marsteller Inc. (a division of Young & Rubicam), where she was responsible for expanding the corporate communications program for advertising executives. She then held senior positions in both public relations and marketing over a six-year period at CBS/FOX Video, then the world's largest home video company. Under Stacey's leadership, Co-Communications has been awarded the Advertising Club's "Best of Show" (2002, 2010, 2012) sponsored by Gannett, Forbes Enterprise Award (2006), and was inducted into the Westchester County Business Hall of Fame (2008). She was recently named PRSA Practitioner of the Year (2013) in recognition of her professional achievements, experience, and reputation in the profession. Stacey speaks often at industry conferences. Stacey is a HuffPost blogger and has been featured in Entrepreneur Magazine, Forbes, Crain's, Sales & Marketing and other leading national publications. She holds a B.S. from Syracuse University, MBA from Fordham University and recently completed a certificate program at NYU Leonard Stern School of Business.