

# Brand you: Building a personal reputation

Companies spend millions of dollars to build a brand name and image. As a potential employee, you need a brand image too.

*By David Grusenmeyer*

**Ever wonder why companies spend** time and money building a brand name for themselves and their products? Simply, it's worth big bucks.

If customers trust a company's reputation, they will pay more for a product, take a chance on the company's unknown products and be more loyal. People are also more forgiving of occasional mistakes if a company has a history of integrity.

Individuals are not much different from companies. Having a trusted personal brand, or reputation, nets you the same advantages as a company. You're likely to foster loyalty, be trusted, be forgiven for occasional mistakes and earn more. We all build our personal brand every day through our character, attitudes and actions.

## Choose your brand

Companies choose the brand image they develop for themselves or a product. You can do the same.

John Ebblic, a heifer raiser in LaFargeville, N.Y., learned the importance of farm image and reputation in the registered Holstein business. Today in his heifer raising business, Ebblic is careful to treat people and do business in a way that always creates a positive image. "My name is the most valuable thing I have," Ebblic says.

Think of yourself as a product and envision what image or brand you want for yourself. The more detailed the vision, the more likely you are to achieve it.

If there's a gap between where you are and where you'd like to be with your brand image, you can close the gap. First, turn the attitudes and behaviors that create your desired brand image into daily habits. Experts say it takes 21 to 30 days for a new behavior to become habit, so be persistent. Two practices can help:

- Tell close friends and associates about the habit you want to develop and ask them to remind you of it.

- Write a one- to four-word description of the behavior or attitude on 3-by-5 cards.

Carry one with you and tape others where you will be able to see them during the day.

"Be willing to invest in yourself long term," Ebblic says to young people looking to build a career in agriculture. "No one builds a positive image overnight; you have to work at it. Always do your best and be consistent in your life philosophy and how you treat people." ■

## Brand you

Brand equity is anything that adds to or subtracts from your real or perceived value as a family member, friend, community member or employee. The 10 items in this "Personal Brand Equity Plan" are designed to do two things:

- Track where you are and the progress you've made in developing your personal brand image.

- Outline the most important things you need to do to continue building your brand equity.

Ideally, each year do a brand equity evaluation and develop an updated plan. It's all about building Brand You.

1. I am currently known for (2 to 4 things).

2. By this time next year, I plan to be known for (1 or 2 more things).

3. My current job challenges me in the following ways (1 to 3 ways).

4. New challenges I would like to take on in the next year (1 or 2 challenges).

5. New things I learned in the past 90 days include (1 to 3 things).

6. New things or skills I would like to learn next year (1 or 2).

7. Important new contacts added to my Rolodex in the last 90 days (2 to 4 names).

8. My public visibility program consists of (1 or 2 things).

9. My main resume-enhancement activity for the next 90 days is (1 item).

10. My resume is materially different from last year on this date in the following (1 or 2 ways).

## FYI

■ David Grusenmeyer is a human resource specialist with PRO-DAIRY.

■ Find a Personal Brand Equity Plan worksheet at the PRO-DAIRY website: [www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/](http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/)

Click on the link to Personal Brand Equity Plan.