

A Personal Brand Enhances Success

By Larry Gulko

In business, it's not only products that can profit from the phenomenal benefits of brand positioning and brand preference—*people* can create a unique and effective brand image for themselves.

Think about it. We aren't all that different from the items on supermarket shelves. People hire us, promote us, travel with us, recommend us, and buy our ideas to make a difference in their organizations.

So, how can we persuade people to engage us, in a friendly, mutually-rewarding way, on a variety of fronts?

We can do so by creating a unique *personal* brand, one defined by trust, integrity, and loyalty, coupled with our ability to deliver on what we stand for—i.e., our brand *promise*. Our brand reflects our vision, philosophy, and other key attributes, and allows us to move our personal and professional lives to a new higher plateau of success.

By establishing a brand that resonates in people's minds, we're able to compete effectively in today's ever-changing, ever-more-competitive landscape.

Brand awareness

Take a fresh look at who you are—what makes you special, and the unique value proposition that attracts others to you. Think conceptually. For instance, when someone says "FedEx," they think "overnight." With Duracell, they think "long-lasting." Now, when someone says your name, what do you want people to think? What truly reflects who you are and the brand image you want to project? Ideally, you want to be thought of as someone who stands above the rest of the crowd—someone who's generated top-of-mind awareness as a trusted, valued personal brand.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's mantra says it all: "Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." It emphasizes being inventive; being a leader (best-selling brand), not a follower (commodity with no perceived product differentiation); defining your point of difference; taking a little risk; and being known as a person with a passion, a vision to achieve something remarkable.



Brand-named
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Building brand loyalty

The sum of all your personal interactions and experiences creates your brand. When you look at it, a brand is the result of a thousand small gestures; it's our job to make each of them count. We do so by creating active brand experiences, or touch-points, using every encounter and interaction we have to show people why our brand—i.e., *we*—is the very best. By doing this, we build brand awareness, drive brand loyalty, and make those around us "raving fans" of our brand.

Successful brands are great business stories. Develop powerful new ideas and strategies to engage others, and communicate the unique characteristics and value of your brand to them. And, most of all, make your personal brand their brand of choice! ■

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IHRSA Associates Assist Those in Need

> Recently, two IHRSA Associate member companies—Stagestep, Inc., and efi Sports Medicine—stepped forward to make life a little bit better for individuals living, or serving, in the Middle East.

Stagestep, a flooring manufacturer based in Philadelphia, was instrumental in helping keep a dance school in Baghdad from closing down. It organized and sponsored a shipment of supplies, including flooring materials, to rebuild and update the Baghdad School of Ballet and Music. Stagestep has been working closely on the renovation project with school officials, the Iraqi Deputy Minister of Culture, and an onsite project team comprised of local and military volunteers.

"With so much depressing news coming from Iraq, it's a privilege to encourage and support those who bravely work for a better future," observes Randy Swartz, the president of Stagestep.

For its part, efi Sports Medicine, a San Diego-based manufacturer of functional rehabilitation and conditioning equipment, has helped improve the health and fitness of American troops serving both in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since 2002, the company has sent more than 150 of its popular Total Gym machines to support U.S. military training operations abroad. Most recently, the 37 soldiers in the U.S. Army 2nd Platoon, 792nd Chemical Company, received a Total Gym to facilitate regular workouts. ■