Why 'authenticity' is so vital to personal branding

By [Donna Rachelson](#)

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The word "authenticity" has become one of those over-used marketing terms - people have stopped thinking about what it really means and why it's important. Yet authenticity is actually critical to successful and sustainable branding, especially in terms of personal branding and marketing.

According to *Webster's English Dictionary*, "authentic" is defined as "genuine; real; not of doubtful origin; trustworthy; of attested authority."

By deduction, that means that being inauthentic in your branding will make sure you come across as fake, untrustworthy and not very credible. Yet people still believe that to create a personal brand, you have to pretend to be someone you're not. The opposite is actually true - if you do put on an act and pretend to be someone else, people will sense the gap between the brand you're trying to create and your honest, true personality.

Your personal brand

Creating a personal brand that reflects your genuine strengths is vital. Marketing your personal brand needs to be undertaken with integrity. Famous American actress and singer Judy Garland once gave the wise advice, "Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of someone else." Being yourself will not only ensure that you are seen as genuine and trustworthy, but it will ensure that others can access your knowledge and skills because they are comfortable to engage with you.

Each person has unique strengths and talents that set them apart from others in their professional field. The key to a successful personal brand is to identify what differentiates you, to develop these skills or attributes and market them in a way that is authentic.

Being vulnerable, can seem scary

Authenticity also means being vulnerable, which can seem scary. As the poet EE Cummings once said, "It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are."

I believe that being slightly vulnerable with people allows you to build deeper, longer-lasting and more beneficial relationships.

Authenticity is relevant in a number of areas in personal branding:

1. Alignment between your personal values and your behaviour. For example, if you cite your brand values are professionalism and responsiveness, how long does it take for you to return calls and email?
2. Being able to say no. If there are activities or opportunities that don't suit your personal brand positioning, are you able to turn them down?
3. Living a congruent life. There must be absolute alignment between what your brand represents at the office, at home and in your community.
4. Taking a stance. Authenticity enables you to take a stand with conviction on issues you feel strongly about, even if not everyone agrees with you.
5. Being 'real'. When you are comfortable to really expose who you truly are, including your dreams, weaknesses, desires and disappointments, you become more desirable to others.

Authenticity is not just some sort of popular marketing fad - it is the reason we put our trust in certain brands and not in others. By ensuring you nurture a personal brand that genuinely reflects your best traits, you will create stronger business relationships and be seen as 'the real deal'. You will ensure that you become someone worth trusting.

ABOUT DONNA RACHELSON

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