

*Being Yourself will ensure that You are being seen as trustworthy*

*THE TERM “authenticity” often gets bandied about by marketing specialists and branding gurus. While most people have some idea of what it means, many have never taken the time to stop and consider what “being authentic” really means and why authenticity is so vital for a successful personal brand.*

Business and marketing innovator Donna Rachelson notes that if your personal brand is not authentic, you will come across as fake and untrustworthy.

“If you are pretending to be someone you’re not, people will sense the gap between the brand you’re trying to create and your honest, true personality,” she says. “This is why creating a personal brand that reflects your genuine strengths is so important, and why marketing your personal brand needs to be undertaken with integrity.”

Famous American actress and singer Judy Garland once gave the following 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,” says Rachelson.

“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.”

Rachelson points out that authenticity also means being vulnerable, which can seem scary.

“As EE Cummings, the poet, once said, ‘It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are’. But I believe that being slightly vulnerable with people allows you to build deeper, longer-lasting and more beneficial relationships,” she says.

Rachelson believes that 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 e-mail messages?
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 more than a mere marketing fad, notes Rachelson. 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’.”

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