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IV. You are the business

1. Seeing yourself as a brand

Most people find it quite difficult to make the transition to seeing themselves as a brand. They are often self-conscious and may be uncomfortable about promoting themselves. The response to this emotional reaction is to think about the people you encounter at conferences, or as speakers and as writers. How do you think of them? Your perception of them is probably that they are smart, capable and interesting. You will not be actively questioning why they are promoting themselves in that way. The same goes for you. Nobody is going to think badly of you; they are more likely to be impressed.

“When I see great stuff done by my competition or if they are getting coverage, to be honest, I feel jealous. Is that bad of me?”

2. Promoting your profile

When it comes to promoting your own profile, you need to take a step back and think of yourself in the same way as your own firm's brand. Try to be dispassionate and objective. Imagine that your profile is a separate entity from you.

“I am a shy person, but I knew that if I was going to get my new firm moving, I had to start promoting myself. I felt so uncomfortable at first. I was used to hiding behind a big firm brand and that always

gave me authority. I hadn't realised how much I took from that brand in terms of my own self-belief too. I had to start from scratch and create a brand for myself. I had to work out who I was and what I stood for."

TASK 2: What is my profile now?

First, you need to determine what kind of profile you have now. Referring back to Task 1, think about your own profile in the same way. Start by doing an internet search on your name. What comes up?

- How do you present yourself in photos? What is your style?
- What topics do you speak or write about?
- What clothing do you wear?
- How do you act?
- Are these all consistent and in the same style?
- What qualities and characteristics do you display?
- What is your personal brand at the moment?

3. Consolidating your thoughts

You may decide that you don't have a brand or that it's not consistent. You may be pleased with what you find or you may be disappointed

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that you are coming over in completely the wrong way. You may not find very much at all! Whatever you decide and whatever you find, see this as a positive first step. Without understanding this, you cannot work out where you are going or how to get there. Things can only get better from here.

“Searching online was interesting, because I thought it would show up lots of information about my professional work, but instead my charity work was far more prominent. Ultimately, I think this is a good thing, as it shows the kind of person I am; but it made me realise that I need to do far more to demonstrate my day job as a professional.”

“I was shocked when I searched my own name online. I always had my photo taken at networking events and I would usually have a glass of wine in hand. What this meant, though, was that every single photo of me online, apart from my work profile picture, was a photo of me drinking alcohol. It was a terrible image. The glass always looks so big in photos too. I have got to put it right and I insist on putting any glass down now.”

“When I searched for myself, there was barely anything there. I had a look at a guy I see as my main competition and realised he has quite a lot online. I’ve got to get myself in gear.”

“I have always been active politically and when I searched on myself, all my political actions were there. This could affect my work. I had never really thought about it before.”

“I discovered that someone else has the same name as me and is working in the same sector. I’m going to have to do something to clarify the situation.”

This chapter ‘IV. You are the business’ by Rebecca Harding is from the Special Report ‘Building Your Professional Profile: How to Enhance Your Career and Win Business’, published by Globe Law and Business.