

Build Your Brand

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Who makes your favorite shoes or outfits? What beverage calls your name when you need a pick-me-up? Whose movies won't you miss? Whose help do you seek when you want a project done right, at home or at work?

All of these questions involve your reactions to a particular brand -- a collection of assumptions about quality, appeal and reliability that you've made in response to repeated experience with a variety of possible products, people or services. Here's the important thing: Whether you like to think about it or not, right now there are people thinking about your very own brand of whatever you are and do, and they're deciding if they want to make it one of their favorites.

International branding strategist Robin Fisher Roffer, author of [*Make a Name for Yourself*](#), suggests eight steps to help women develop and project their own brands.

Eight Essential Steps

1. Identify the primary "product" (service, resource, special ability, etc.) you have to offer others.
2. Identify your core values. What really matters to you?
3. Identify your passions. What things or ideas do you love?
4. Identify your talents. What have you always been recognized for (particularly as a kid)? What do you do better than most other people? What skills do people seem to notice in you?
5. From your hopefully long list of talents and qualities, choose the top five, the ones you do best and enjoy doing the most.
6. Weave the items on all your lists into a statement of your specialty. What are you particularly gifted at delivering?
7. Write a paragraph emphasizing your specialty and your five key talents, weaving in your most important values, passions and skills.
8. Now add a tag line to your brand.

The Tag Line Tells Your Story

A coach I know who consults by phone -- primarily helping six-figure earners work their way even further up the corporate ladder -- goes by this tag line: "A coach for successful people to help them be even more successful." A senior project manager working in the crossfire between the marketing group and packaging designers at a stressful manufacturing facility has developed

this tag line: "An efficient problem solver who understands and enjoys both the creativity of designers and the practicality of marketers." My tag line for my counseling and coaching practice is this: "The permissionary -- a visionary realist to help you discover and manifest your dreams.

A tag line's shorthand helps other people remember a key point about you. At the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts chapter of the [NAWBO](#) (National Association of Women Business Owners) breakfast meetings, every member and guest stands up and introduces herself via her tag line, or verbal business card. In this organization, the women remember each other's tag lines as easily as their names, and after each month's meeting, hundreds of ripples go out about each of the women attending and what she has to offer. And it works for entrepreneurs and employees alike.

Get the Word Out

Once you've worked over your tag line and the other items on the list for a few days or weeks, it's time to take them public with someone you trust. Keeping them secret is a sure way to never act on them.

The road to career disappointment is littered with lists, dreams and goals never shared with anyone. So get your "brand me" musings out into the light of day to solicit support and constructive criticism from someone else. And you could be a brand advisor for that person in return. And it would be even better if you could get four or five women together regularly to encourage and critique each other's branding strategies and activities.

Creating and building your unique brand is an organic and ongoing process. So consider yourself and your career a work in progress, and reach out to get and give as much help as possible as your brand shifts and matures across the expanse of your career.