

Personal branding

Present yourself in the best and most appealing way.

BRANDING is not just for companies and products. Professionals also need it to project the right impression to colleagues, bosses and customers.

Wendy Lee, a professional image consultant and president of the Malaysian Association of Brand & Image Consultants (Mabic) answers some questions on personal branding.

What is personal branding?

Lee: Personal branding is the business of marketing the brand called YOU. Personal branding is a way of communicating what makes you different and special. It is about understanding your unique attributes — strengths, skills, values, and passions — and using them to separate yourself from your competitors or peers.

But, do bear in mind — your brand is not your logo. Your brand is not your company name. Your brand is not your product.

In reality, you do not own your brand. Your brand is owned by your customers, the people you work with, and anyone else who has an impression of you. Your brand is other people's perception of what it's like to do business with you, work with you, or be with you.

Your brand is really a collection of perceptions in the mind of others.

If a client wanted a full branding makeover, what are the steps you suggest he takes?

Lee: I would use a simple formula known as:



Lee: Personal branding is a way of communicating what makes you different and special.

YOU = mpc2 (M = Mindset, P = Packaging, C2 = Consistency, Consistency)

Mindset: Having the right mindset to embrace change, to grow as an individual and to move forward is of utmost importance. Your thoughts are everything. They form your moods, attitudes and habits.

Packaging: Your packaging or Personal Branding Toolkit must convey the same message as your brand. This includes: Your wardrobe, business card, websites, Facebook, blogs, Twitter, email address, etc.

Consistency, consistency: Once you have established your own style and your brand, stick to it. Walk your talk. Make the effort to ensure you gain a reputation for saying what you mean and meaning what you say.

How does one know if he or she needs a professional image makeover?

Lee: There are a few ways to know if you need a makeover:



For a polished look, light makeup for the ladies is a must. — AP

- You want to create YOU™ — Your own personal brand.
- You would like to create a great impression on everyone you meet.
- You are fresh out of school and would like to master the art of dressing for both business and leisure.
- You have not been working for years and do not know what is deemed suitable at an office environment.
- You have not been receiving positive comments on your dressing or on the way you look.
- You are stuck in a style rut.
- You feel you have nothing to wear although you have a closet full of clothes.

In my years of experience as an image consultant, I have had clients coming to me for various reasons — people who recently got promoted, who are now coming out to the workforce, who have not bought any clothes in ages, or who just simply want to learn something new.

How should someone present himself or herself when potential employers call or e-mail?

Lee: You must have your “elevator speech” ready. The term “elevator speech” was probably coined from the idea that we sometimes meet the important people in our lives in elevators. The odd situation we encounter in most elevators is that nobody speaks or looks at anyone

else, and yet we have a captive audience for that short period of time.

Very few people are ready to interact in case someone does speak. The idea of an “elevator speech” is to have a prepared presentation that grabs attention and says a lot in a few words.

Who you are, what you do, who your clients are, and what happens as a result could be part of your “elevator speech.” For example, this is my elevator pitch:

“I’m Wendy, I’m an image consultant.

“I work with both companies and individuals to enhance their image for effective customer relations and sales.”

So, when your potential employers call or e-mail you, don’t say:

“I’m Jared, and I like to meet people and conduct sales calls.”

Say instead:

“I’m Jared. I like helping businesses improve the way they market their products, so that they find more clients and close more deals.”

It sounds more professional and makes you sound more interesting.

What are your five easy tips for a polished look?

Lee: 1. Your hair is your crowning glory.

Men — Billionaires don’t sport oily looking or long dishevelled hair. Think Simon Cowell.

Ladies — No grandma perms and

keep your hair away from your face. Your style must say current, healthy and professional.

2. Your face is your fortune.

Men — Keep your face clean without stubble.

Ladies — Light makeup is a must.

3. Your clothes show your style.

Men — You wear your clothes, not the other way around.

Ladies — Think feminine yet professional. Not loud and trashy. A suit is a foolproof way if you are unsure of what to wear.

4. Your posture shows your confidence. So, stand straight and smile, genuinely.

5. Your smell shows your personal hygiene. A light spray of *eau de toilette* will earn you extra brownie points.

The proverb goes “Do not judge a book by its cover,” but really, in this day and age, do we even have the time to delve deeply into a person’s psyche before making a decision? Your outward — physical as well as cyber — appearance can and will make an impact on how the world perceives you. With so much hinging on your ability to present yourself in the best and most appealing way, are you sure you can afford to take personal branding lightly?

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