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Help Your Students Form Complementary Groups By Communicating Their Personal Brand

What is a Personal Brand?

A brand is a succinct, highly creative way of expressing an identity.

Although often thought of in relation to companies, the features of effective brand building have tremendous value on a personal scale.

Whether you recognize it or not, you are constantly building and refining a personal brand, which is expressed in the way you act, talk and form relationships. Your brand communicates your value and your needs to others. Ensuring it is a clear and accurate reflection of your goals is therefore an essential condition for collaboration.

VIDEO RESOURCE

Apple's "I'm a Mac" campaign provides an interesting discussion piece regarding the connection between personal and corporate branding:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5z0la5jDt4>

Why is it Valuable?

- **It is quickly and easily understood.** This is particularly important for networking events which afford limited time to make an impression on potential collaborators.
- **It builds relationships.** Although the essence of a brand should be quick and easy to understand, its full value comes from a long-term process of establishing a sense of familiarity and trust.
- **It is empathic.** Successful brands are designed to build a rapport with a particular target market. This requires deep understanding of the needs and desires of this group.
- **It increases creative communication.** An effective brand is expressed many different ways - through language, tone, visuals, and activities or events. Building a brand is therefore an excellent way of becoming a dynamic communicator.

Personal Branding in Your Classroom

Help students form groups using the branding activity on the back of this page.

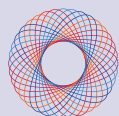
- In this activity, students practice clearly communicating their values and goals and in doing so identify potential collaborators.
- This activity also introduces three personal brands that are common among entrepreneurial teams.

Have students conduct self-assessment through the lens of personal branding.

- Have your students create their ideal brand at the start of the year, or at the beginning of a new unit.
 - What do they want to be known for?
 - What kind of relationship do they want to build with their peers and their teacher?
 - What behaviours need to be undertaken to build this personal brand?
- Over the course of the year or unit, have the students keep track of the things they do to support and challenge their ideal brand.

Derive communication lessons from successful corporate brands.

- Get students to bring in examples of brands they enjoy, then ask them the following questions:
 - Who does this brand want to collaborate with? (That is, who are its target customers?) How does it communicate this?
 - What value does this brand give people? How does it communicate this value?
 - What is most and least effective about how this brand's message is communicated?

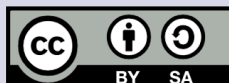


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Using Personal Branding to Build Groups

EXTRA RESOURCE: [Click here to download a PowerPoint deck for this activity](#)

Activity Time: 25-35 minutes

STEP 1: Are you a hacker, hustler or designer?

Highly effective entrepreneurial teams often have a mix of the personal brands described below. Ask your students to select the brand with which they identify most strongly:

The Hacker

- builds things
- comes up with unexpected solutions to problems
- will bend the rules if it's valuable to do so

The Hustler

- sells things
- enjoys presentations, debates and public speaking
- excels at coming up with arguments

The Designer

- designs things
- shows empathy towards customer experience
- is highly resilient and open to other people's ideas

STEP 2: Effectively communicating your brand

Students now come up with a 60-second explanation of why they would make a good hacker, hustler or designer in a group. This explanation should include:

1. EVIDENCE: What is one thing the student has done in the past to support their assertion that they are an effective hacker, hustler or designer?
2. GOALS: What goals does the student have for this collaboration?

STEP 3: Networking

Over a period of 10 minutes, students share their 60-second explanation with 5 other people in the class. They should aim to talk with students who have a different brand identity than their own.

STEP 4: Group formation

Based on what they have learned about the values and goals of their classmates, students form groups of three. Each group should contain a hacker, hustler and designer.

Students may also use this time to further "sell" their personal brand to potential group mates, convincing them of the value of collaborating with them.

What Success Looks Like

Students efficiently communicate the unique value they add to the group

- Students demonstrate clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities both during and after group formation.

Heterogeneous groups are formed

- Groups contain members who have a wide range of skills and interests.
- Members are able to explicitly state how the different skillsets of the group members complement each other.