Are Any of These Behaviors Damaging Your Professional Brand?
By Kim Dority

Having a strong, positive professional brand will open up opportunities for you throughout your career. Having a bad professional reputation, however, can sabotage your career in countless ways. Are you guilty of any of these brand-damaging behaviors?

**Burning bridges with previous employers.** Had it with your job? Resist the urge to simply tell everyone what you think of them and then stomp out the door. No matter where you live or what profession you’re in, assume it really is a small world, and your unprofessional behavior may come back to haunt you in the future.

**Over-sharing photos online.** Yep, it may be fun to post Friday night’s bar-hopping escapades on your Facebook page, but keep in mind that photos posted online tend to be much more visible – including to potential employers – than you’d imagined.

**Not watching your online words.** Like photos, online communications (think blog posts, comments, association discussion lists, etc.) live on years beyond their original publication. Thinking about starting (or participating in) a flame war? Think twice – how would this look to a potential employer?

**Sabotaging co-workers.** Word gets out quickly when you develop a reputation as a back-stabber. Play nice – when you help others succeed, they’ll be much more interested in helping you succeed.

**Being unreliable.** Everybody drops a ball now and then, but if you consistently fail to meet deadlines, deliver papers on time, or show up prepared, you’ll develop a reputation for being unreliable and immature – regardless of how smart or talented you are.

**Playing the blame game.** Employers look for people who can step up and take responsibility, for both successes and failures. If you refuse to take responsibility for your actions when they don’t go well, and instead blame others, you’ll lose the respect and trust of your co-workers and employers. Not a great way to build your professional brand.

**Taking credit for others’ or team efforts.** A professional looks for ways to give credit to those who have earned it. If you take credit for others’ work or successes, you will develop a reputation as a selfish, untrustworthy co-worker. That reputation quickly makes its way to bosses and potential employers.

**Using people.** One of the joys of building a career is being able to help others – and to have them help you. But if you’re doing all the taking, and not reciprocating, word gets around fast. This is definitely not something you want to have as part of your professional brand.

**Being difficult to work with.** You don’t want to develop a reputation as the person who’s temperamental, moody, arrogant, negative, or always taking offense at perceived slights. You want colleagues at previous jobs to want to work with you again, and recommend you to their new employers. If “difficult to work with” is part of your professional brand, everyone will find ways to avoid working with you!

**Neglecting to say “thank you.”** Throughout your career, a lot of people will help you in various ways. Remembering to thank them, especially with a written note, is not just a professional courtesy; it’s how you build a reputation as a conscientious and appreciative colleague. Failing to do so marks you as unappreciative and selfish – characteristics unlikely to contribute to a positive professional brand.

If you recognize your own behavior in any of the items described above, you’ll want to start rethinking your approach ASAP!