

You As the Brand

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Personal branding is a paramount facet of establishing yourself in your field and a key factor in developing and cultivating relationships. Your personal brand is an aura that defines you. It is in every word you speak and how you speak it. It comes across in every email, phone call, and text message.

Every single thing you do in building relationships says something about you, your character and what type of coworker you will be.

Traditional modal forms of communication have been a vital contribution to doing business since they became available to the public. Telephone conversations, email correspondence and the like are essentially your avatar in lieu of an actual face-to-face meeting. Conducting yourself in an outstanding manner doesn't always mean using perfect grammar and the proper honorifics, though that is certainly a part of it. Being outstanding means standing out – indicating with each and every communication that you are different from the crowd.

When communicating over the phone, be sure to give your information in a clear and concise manner. Speak confidently and not like a neurotic Woody Allen character. Chris Rock has a joke about men who speak with no authority and never get what they want as a result. It's not a matter of exerting control over the phone, or of talking down to someone. A confident voice isn't only a joy to speak to, but it communicates that the speaker is someone who doesn't play games – a person who doesn't waste her time or yours with nonsense.

[Effective email communication](#) hinges on good writing, but also a cogent presentation of yourself. No one wants to read a personal email that reads like a press release. Nor does anyone want a business email that refers to a recent divorce and pivots on extremely vulgar, “chummy” language. I have received both types of email from potential contacts and had to later explain to both of them in person why I never contacted them back. Find a balance between business and personal. Develop a style that gets your point across quickly, but in a memorable, positive way. In a modern world so mired in text communications, good emails can go a long way in reflecting positively on the sender.

When you finally do land the personal meeting, choose a space worthy of the occasion. I am frequently in the Midwest and when I get down to the personal meeting, I generally choose one of the many [downtown Chicago hotels](#), since they are imbued with a sense of history, opulence and generally include restaurants. This is why meeting with restaurateurs and Hollywood bigwigs is so exciting: they definitely know how to choose a place that reflects them and their tastes.

The atmosphere and locale of the meeting play just as important a role as your demeanor during the meeting. The location effectively becomes part of your brand. That being said, the location should be consistent with the image you've exuded so far, but that doesn't mean you have to speak with a nasal French accent when meeting your guest at *La Closerie de Lilas*. Obviously, you must be yourself, but also be conscious of what the location you choose says about you.

Your communication is your greatest asset in business, and if you keep in mind how it affects your image, you can easily develop practices that will enable you to stand out from the crowd!