



# Five Ways Develop Your Own Brand

By Catherine Kaputa

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*If you're a fan of conversational question games along the lines of "If you were an animal, what would you be?" you'll enjoy what's coming. Today we have a guest post from a branding expert, Catherine Kaputa, about how individuals can follow the same branding strategies used by companies and product marketers to distinguish ourselves in our careers. Here are Ms. Kaputa's five ideas for thinking about personal branding:*

## 1. Own an Attribute (Think Volvo and safety)

Let's say your old boss is gone and the new head honcho is not aware of all your glorious achievements. Or you have an important job interview coming up. Look for an attribute that is credible for you and that someone else doesn't own. Maybe your strength is accountability or your relentless drive in closing a sale. Use that attribute as your organizing idea in your elevator speech and résumé. Make it your mantra. Use examples and stories to connect the attribute to you.

## 2. Invent a New Process or Magic Ingredient (Think Google)



Creating a “new process” or having a “magic ingredient” is one of the oldest brand strategies; it dates back to patent medicines. Consider this strategy, though it takes creativity, if you’re a consultant, doctor or an innovative professional or entrepreneur. Put the focus on what you do that is different and remarkable. Look at Dr. Arthur Agatston. He defined a three-step diet “process” with delicious food, and branded it with a great name – the South Beach Diet.

### **3. Be the Maverick (Think Steve Jobs and Apple)**

As much as leaders are part of our mythology, so are mavericks. Often the best way to stand out is by being the opposite of what’s expected.

This even works in settings that seems to demand conformity as related in this recent New York Times article on Barack Obama: “The young law professor stood apart in too many ways to count.”

Consider the maverick positioning strategy if you’re a professional or entrepreneur who can bill your point of difference as being the antidote to the establishment. Beware, though. If mavericks are seen as becoming too much like the establishment, they can lose their maverick status.

### **4. Be the Expert (Think Barbara Corcoran and real estate)**

Is there an area in your field not already crowded with experts? Can you interpret something in a new way? Then, position yourself as an expert to others, whether it’s through a newsletter, magazine articles, a blog, speaking or the ultimate expert vehicle, a book.

### **5. Promote Your Special Heritage (Think Stolichnaya vodka and Russia)**



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Consider this strategy if you attended a prestigious school, training program or worked at a top company. It also works if your country of origin is in demand like India or China (or if your last name is Bush, Kennedy or Rockefeller).

Say you're considering two job offers. One is at a company with a solid reputation but where you didn't connect with the boss. The other offer is with a lesser known company that seemed more comfortable. From a branding perspective, it's smart to get out of your comfort zone and go with the well-regarded company. The company's brand will become part of your heritage, and, after all, your boss could change.