

Self-Leadership

Five Words. It's just five words. They are an important five words. And, so I'm going to use a number of words, in this space, to move you—my colleagues—to identify and celebrate those five words.

I think, in part, what helped me to distinguish the premise of these words—not the Five words—is another colleague. At a professional retreat, in service to personal leadership development, he proudly made the statement, “I've never met a mirror I didn't like”. We chuckled. It was a statement not said in arrogance; just his truth. He's right. This leadership development specialist hopes that each of us, every day, and in any minute of the day, can look into the mirror and find someone we like; in fact, love.

Now, of course, I know we all have “bad hair” days. Those days may even turn into months; people can be cruel, society can be divisive, and our families and places of work are far too often conditional. None the less, I still want all of us to value the mirror. For in that mirror, what you see and experience, is the reflection of Love. And, this love is wrapped up in your own innate dignity and sanctity as a member of the human family, as well as your professional capacity.

The wisdom of the ages and the sages has always promoted the invitation to: *Know Thyself*. The healthiest among us, understand that knowing ourselves,

and at times overcoming ourselves, is the foundation to effective leadership with and for others. And, there is no question, in this professional's experience, that just five words stewards its import.

Whether we realize it or not, we already and always have a personal brand. Our own self-image, as well as how others experience us, bespeaks a brand; a very personal but public brand. Are you self-aware enough to understand, celebrate, and market your brand?

And, just what is one's brand? It is the sum and expression of our qualities, competencies, experiences, interests, and relationships. Said another way, brand is our reputation both personally and professionally. It is what we are known for—and how people experience us. It's rhetorical for the moment, "but just how do people experience you. And, do you care?"

Brand...your brand...is also the essence of YOU. It is the combination of your internal belief system and external persona wrapped up in the expression, "Your brand is that part of you that people remember when you leave the room—whether it is the Board Room or your Living Room." Or, one's brand is the way another would describe you if you weren't there to describe yourself. How confident would you be with another's description of you; and, again, do you care? In truth, whether you care, or not, already reflects your personal brand.

So, here is a bold question for your consideration on the commute home, or while waiting for the next flight: Is the perception you have of yourself in alignment with the perception that others have of you? If asked, “what five words would others use to describe you?” Would you be self-aware enough to own those words—be proud of those words? And, would the five words that you would use to describe yourself be simpatico with those who you live, play, and work with? In short, if we are not stewarding our brand---be assured that others are labeling if not branding us. Hmmmm?

Yes, they are just five words. But, they are an important five words. What are those five words, for you, at this moment in time, that best describe your personal brand—reflect your reputation? If you cannot name, with confidence, the five words that reflect your personal brand, it is likely that others are struggling to name them, or with any sense of certainty.

Each of us are leaders in our own right. I’d like to believe we make a proactive choice in developing ourselves as leaders because our places of work, our communities, and our families yearn for authentic and integral leadership. Self-leadership is taking responsibility for our brand. It is desiring to understand ourselves and to improve upon ourselves. And, thus, the following invitation for your consideration.

In these summer months, schedule three 30-minute sessions. You decide where and when? But, schedule these sessions so you can reflect on and identify the five words that best reflect your personal brand. Start broad, don't be shy or humble, or inauthentic. Capture the first 7-10 words that come to your mind. And, yes, they can be aspirational words—as long as you commit to developing that word to reflect your brand. Consult with one friend, one family member, and one colleague; ask for their five words. Then, whenever you are ready, land on five words that you believe best reflect YOU—but also define the words for you.

This leader chooses to continually reflect on and fine-tune his five words; it keeps me honest, and it enables me to safeguard my reputation—which is also my personal brand. Here are my five words—and good luck with yours.

- ✓ Credible
- ✓ Responsible
- ✓ Thoughtful
- ✓ Enjoyable
- ✓ Skilled

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