

## Building your personal brand in the sports turf industry

Your personal brand is the combination of your experience, skills and talents that distinguishes you from others who do the same work as you. This is very important when you are seeking and competing for another job. For those who are not in the job market, leveraging your personal brand is equally, if not more important. It helps you to increase your value to your employer, which results in greater opportunity for compensation and job security.

Like a retail brand, your personal brand encourages those who employ you to trust your ability to deliver quality field conditions within budget and on time. Your personal brand is a promise of what your employer can expect from you, so that when the unexpected happens—weather, pests, equipment failure—your personal brand is what saves you.

It's a given that you do a good job, but if you are not consistently telling or reminding people about the good job that you do, it is not top of mind. Your good work goes unrecognized. The perception others have of you can enhance or damage your career. Use these strategies to create a strong personal brand that establishes you as a professional and essential to the operational success of the sports facility.

### Top ten personal brand-building strategies

Create a distinctive role for yourself. Answer the questions: "What is it that makes me different? What are my qualities, characteristics, greatest strengths, noteworthy traits that set me apart from my competitors or colleagues?"

Set goals and write them down. Goals enable you to chart a course to your destination.

Build on your strengths. Too often leaders spend a huge amount of time trying to shore up their weaknesses. Yes, weaknesses do deserve some acknowledgement and attention, but expanding on what you do well deserves the lion's share of time.

Associate with credible people. You are known by the company you keep. Embrace high ethical standards.

Be responsive. Return telephone calls and answer requests promptly, no matter how trivial they may seem.

Share the credit and rewards. Make others look good, but be the go-to person for new ideas and forward thinking.

Get involved in professional associations, industry organizations and your community. Write articles and speak for these organizations. These are great ways to enhance your visibility and let people experience your brand. Think of it as "career karma"—the more you give, the more you get in return.

Dress for success. "Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence in society," Mark Twain said. This doesn't mean that coat and tie is status quo, but to wear appropriate attire for the occasion.

Impart business competence and pure professionalism. The image we project will form other people's opinions of you personally, and of the sports turf management profession.

Do a good job, do a good job, do a good job and then tell others about the good job you are doing. Do everything to the best of your ability. No amount of publicity or civic goodwill can overcome the perception that poor performance or shoddy ethics brings. ■

Kim Heck is chief executive officer of the Sports Turf Managers Association, [www.stma.org](http://www.stma.org).

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