

Invest in personal brand building for both you and the greater good

 By [James Maposa](#)

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A few years ago a friend was made acting CEO of an architectural firm. This was the first time in my circle of friends that one had been given the nod for an executive position. We were super excited and knocked back a decent amount of bottles to celebrate our friend's achievements. I also need to applaud my friend for his loyalty to us by mentioning that if a board position availed itself, based on our credentials he'd make sure that he put a good word in.

Noble as his intention was, reality kicked in. We were virtual unknowns in the business fraternity. Even if our esteemed friend forwarded our resumes it would only be his endorsement that we would go by and nothing else to substantiate his claims. Through introspection, I realised that more needed to be done from a brand building standpoint. While still a consultant, I did a fair amount of research in the industrial space. I remember attending a few conferences on industrial equipment that focused on technological advancement. At these sessions, there was this gentleman who was always invited to speak about pumps within the context of new innovations and how they were contributing to improvements in efficiencies. Funny thing is I can't remember his name, but we all knew him as the "pumps guy" - he even called himself this. So hypothetically speaking, if a pumps company wanted someone to sit on their board who knew a lot about pumps within the local and regional market, including key trends and developments, guess who they'd call? The Pumps Guy.



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So we've all agreed that you need to market yourself to grow awareness of who you are and what you represent. But marketing yourself is easily done through building a personal brand to embody your talents. Think of building a brand as similar to building a personal brand. When someone sees an Apple logo, they know its linked to user friendly, technological excellence – man over machine. The Nike swoosh stands for quality sports and urban apparel. Coca-Cola refreshes like nothing on earth and so on and so forth.

Based on the above, in a world where personal competition has greatly improved, significant investment must be committed to building your own personal brand. First off carve your niche. Put in the work to develop your craft. Learn from the best until you become better than them. Question the obvious through coming up with new and innovative ways of doing things. Challenge the norm to create a new norm. Document this progress and review how far along you've come. Leverage this

feedback to transition to the next phase.

The next phase is centered around communicating your position. Remember to do this assertively, but not arrogantly. Respect those who have journeyed the path you're taking before you. Embrace their contribution and present your case as one that builds from where they left off. Do as much research as you can before you present your position. Take on the hard questions and be willing to admit what you don't know. Don't dwell too much on what you do know, because that will come off as either bragging or boasting. Ensure that what you're good at bringing tangible difference to your field/concept or industry.

Lastly, make sure you present your position as often as you can. Use these interfaces to obtain feedback on you as an individual and the concepts you strongly believe in. Leverage the feedback to further your craft and be better prepared for your next speaking opportunity. Practice as much as you can before you stand in front of a crowd. Engage with the crowd and never talk down to them. Always add a bit of personality to what you stand for.

Building your brand isn't easy, but through investment of time and commitment, your phone will start to ring often based on a newfound belief in you. This is manifestation of your commitment to your craft and reward for all the time you put in.

ABOUT JAMES MAPOSA

Maposa is the founder and managing director of Birguid, a research and advisory company. Maposa has 15 years work experience, mostly spent in research and strategy consulting. Maposa is passionate about socio-economic development, business growth and continuity.

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