



If you don't know what your brand is then you'll never fully understand why customers, coworkers, etc. respond the way they do. Watch DDD's founder Sheri Rubin explain the impact of misperceiving your personal brand as she walks you through the 5 Words or Phrases Review – complete with worksheet - below from her article [It Doesn't Matter Who You Are!](#)

“I am honest and hardworking” is a phrase pretty much everyone uses: job candidates, employees during reviews, leaders speaking to the press, criminals claiming innocence, etc. Statistically speaking, some of these people are lying. And some of these liars have no idea they're doing it.

In an ideal world we would all be who we say we are. Better yet – we'd be self-aware enough to know who everyone else thinks we are. Then there's this world. Here, our insight is cloudy at best. Intent matters less than perception and perception is the only reality.

That's why when I give some of my talks, I not only explain corporate branding and imaging and how it affects good customer service, but personal branding as well. How you present yourself as an individual and how you handle yourself in various situations all affects how you are perceived. How you are perceived determines how you are treated.

You may think of yourself as the most kind-hearted, patient, and caring human being who has ever existed, but if your professional persona is seen selling out coworkers, yelling at subordinates, and sabotaging rivals, no one is going to associate you with Mother Teresa.

As a leader you have to be *extremely* careful about how you are perceived because it directly influences your effectiveness. It can be the difference between record growth and a “Going out of Business” sale.

I can't claim that I have got this down pat. I'm not immune to lapses. However, I am keenly aware of how I can come across to others.

I learned a long time ago that I picked up a lot of personality traits from my parents, friends, and early colleagues throughout the years. Some of these are great, while others ... well, not so much. I've been working for the last decade or so to assess these traits, boosting the positive ones and removing or adjusting the negative ones.

The best part is that you can do this too. But first you need to get real about who you are and how others see you. Take a deep breath and prepare yourself – it can be hard to hear that inner you doesn't match outer you.

I've developed an exercise to help with this self-assessment – “5 words or phrases.” It's a three-step exercise that anyone can do and it'll take you down the path to self-awareness, understanding how you are perceived, and empowering you to manage that perception. It works like this:

## Step 1: Ask yourself who you are

Take out a pen and paper, grab your tablet, open up a text file on your computer, send yourself a text message, or print this out and fill it in the below – just get started. The method doesn't matter, just that you get it down somewhere. I want you to write five words or phrases that *YOU* think describe you. This is not how you think others perceive you, but your own feelings about yourself. Focus on the you that exists in this very moment, not the person you were in the past or who you want to be in the future. Go ahead, I'll wait...

*The 5 Words or Phrases I would use to describe myself are:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Got them? Good – next step!

## Step 2: Seek insight from people you trust

Now I want you to go out and find at least five trustworthy people who know you (at any level). Trust is incredibly important. You want people who care enough about you that they'll be honest, brutally so. Explain to them that you want their help with a self-improvement task and ask them for five words or phrases that describe and define you as a person to them. Ask them not to sugarcoat it – negative or positive, you want honest feedback.

I keep using the word "trust" here very intentionally. It's of the utmost importance that you trust these people for honest feedback, AND that you trust that they have the best intentions when they respond. Do not take offense to any negative feedback – it is there to help you.

Pro-tip: Try getting feedback from people who have known you for different amounts of time. This way you can compare first impressions to those who've known you for a long time. (Think of all those times you've heard those "Once you get to know me, you'll see I'm really..." statements.)

Feel free to meet in person, call, text message, email, post on Facebook or Twitter. Do whatever it takes – the more results the better. I've put in space for five responses below if you want to print this out and ask people. Okay – go ask them!

*The 5 Words or Phrases \_\_\_\_\_ would use to describe \_\_\_\_\_:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*The 5 Words or Phrases \_\_\_\_\_ would use to describe \_\_\_\_\_:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*The 5 Words or Phrases \_\_\_\_\_ would use to describe \_\_\_\_\_:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*The 5 Words or Phrases \_\_\_\_\_ would use to describe \_\_\_\_\_:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*The 5 Words or Phrases \_\_\_\_\_ would use to describe \_\_\_\_\_:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Done? Great – last step!

### Step 3: Compare and contrast

Now that you've gotten all the data it's time to compare the two sets of answers. This is where you really get to assess your self-awareness. Did you say you were detail-oriented and 3 out of 5 trusted advisors agree – great! Did you say you were punctual and hardworking but most of your friends said you were lazy or always late? Great!

Yes, I said great! You just got a blessing in disguise. It stings to hear that you're seen as lazy or disrespectful of other people's time – but now you know. Better yet, now you can do something about it (if you want to, of course).

It's okay to dig a little deeper for follow-up. Ask those friends/colleagues why they think you're lazy or lack punctuality. Perhaps it's because every time they come to your office you're always on Facebook or Twitter. It's possible that you're a community manager and you have to keep up on what others are saying and manage those mediums for your job. In that case, you can use this opportunity to talk with your friends about why you're on Twitter, and also use the knowledge to help inform how you interact with others in the future.

Perhaps a few people agreed that you had great attention to detail, but when you probed a little more you found out that they thought it was too much detail. It's time for more self-reflection. Perhaps you need to be a little more succinct and hold details back when appropriate. It's all about managing expectations and continuous self-improvement, something every great leader should do.

**Bonus Step: The 5 words you wish to be**

I also recommend that people consider doing an extra step which is writing down the 5 words or phrases with which you would LIKE to be described.

*The 5 words or phrases I would like used to describe myself in the future:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

This helps give you a goal to shoot for and can help give you actionable steps to progress toward that goal.

For example, if you know that you are consistently described as "late," but you want to be described as "punctual" in the future, then work to change that. Make it a habit to leave for events earlier than you think you need to, learn to anticipate problems, plan more ahead of time (what to wear, what to bring, etc.), set more alarms, get others to call you to make sure you're up and moving in the morning. So on and so forth.

The point is that the best leaders are the ones who are constantly aware of themselves, how others view them, and what they can do to enhance that perception. If everyone on your team sees you as a tyrant who couldn't care less about them, it's going to be hard to get them to rally their efforts and support your projects. If, on the other hand, they see you as a collaborator who just wants to see everyone reach their full potential, then they might not balk if you send back their work 'one more time' for a review and polish.

In the end, though there are some innate traits that will be *extremely* hard to change, knowing is half the battle. For a great leader, that knowledge is what you use to win the war.

**Get your friends involved!** Share this exercise with your friends and colleagues by pointing them to one of our two downloadable PDFs so they can complete the review with you:

Download full PDF - Includes entire original article with step-by-step guidance and worksheet to go through the review. - <http://bit.ly/5wopfull>

Download assessment PDF - Includes review worksheet only - <http://bit.ly/5wopwkst>

**Complete the worksheet!** On the next page you'll find a one-page worksheet you can print and use to complete the exercise - don't forget to keep the results to compare with the next time you do the review!



Self-Assessment Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Step 1: Ask yourself who you are Write down five words or phrases that YOU think describe you as you exist in this very moment, not the person you were in the past or who you want to be in the future.

This is not how you think others perceive you, but how you perceive you. Be honest with yourself!

The 5 Words or Phrases I would use to describe myself are:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2: Seek insight from people you trust Ask at least five people you trust to give you honest feedback with five words or phrases that describe you as a person to them – don't let them sugarcoat it!

The 5 Words or Phrases others use to describe me are:

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_
1. \_\_\_\_\_ 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_
1. \_\_\_\_\_ 1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3: Compare and contrast Where do you agree? Where do you disagree? What surprised you? What didn't? Write your thoughts down about the results and what they mean to you here:

\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_

Bonus Step: The 5 words you wish to be Write down the 5 words or phrases you would LIKE people to use to describe you in the future.

The 5 words or phrases I would like used to describe myself in the future:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_