

Re-branding Yourself at Work

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The issue of making a personal brand, or re-branding yourself, if you think you have been “*restrictively-labeled*” by others at work, is a fairly common problem for all engineers, and particularly for Industrial & Systems Engineers (ISEs). In general, different groups may think of Industrial Engineers as doing only certain things (like Time Studies, or Simulation, or Cost Estimating) or they may view you personally as being good at one thing but don’t think of you as being strong in other activities.

This has happened to me several times at different Management Consulting companies, when working with other consulting disciplines (like Finance, Marketing, or Computer Consultants). It has also happened to me at the Boeing Co. when working on projects with other engineering disciplines (like Aeronautical, Mechanical, Electrical, or Civil Engineers).

Look for opportunities to brand (or re-brand) yourself, at the beginning of a new project or assignment. You might be able to bring in some of the solutions or approaches you used on your past Internships, or your Senior Design Project, or from your University classes. You might bring in approaches & solutions you have read about in *ISE Magazine* or other technical sources. Try to “show by doing” whenever you can, rather than just “talk about what you can do”. Once others see you have additional skills, they will broaden their view of what you can do, particularly if they really need your help.

I used to mention the type of projects or activities I wanted to work on next, to my management, or volunteer for a challenging Team assignment as soon as I heard about it. After a while, a good opportunity would usually open up. Afterwards, when I was successful on a new assignment (either with a small team or just working by myself) – senior management usually noticed, particularly if they heard good reports back from internal customers. I tried to find a way to invite my direct management, whenever we were receiving any Team awards for a successful project, since it reflected well on them too.

During an Implementation, try to go the extra step and offer additional help, and show some of the things you can do, but usually don’t get to try. If you can, find some people in your company that are doing the kind of work you want to be doing, or the kinds of projects you would like to be on – then volunteer to work with them, or at least meet with them occasionally and share ideas. You might find several “kindred spirits” and they may enjoy sharing their ideas and projects with you.

If Performance Evaluations are being used at your company, look for a way to document your interests and new focus areas, and bring these up during your Review sessions; be specific about new things you would like to try, or skills you want to utilize more. If an opportunity doesn’t come up for this sort of discussion with your management, you might need to schedule a one-on-one meeting with them to talk about it. With a large size

group (10-15 staff members), it is often difficult for a manager to know as much about each member of their staff as they would like to; and often their attention is on the “problem of the moment” (issues with their own management, production/operation problems, newer team members, etc.).

An occasional need for some “re-branding” is not uncommon, for working Industrial Engineers.