

Setting SMART objectives for brand 'ME'

Dr Sarah Turnbull
University of Portsmouth

As marketers we are well attuned to setting objectives for the brands we take care of. Having established where our brand is now, we then decide where we want it to be – and how we are going to get it there. We understand the importance of setting clear objectives and developing strategies that will enable us to achieve these goals. This is just an inherent aspect of what we do in marketing. Although we may all plan effectively for the brands we look after, I wonder how many of us really plan our own careers in the same strategic manner?

Think about it. When was the last time you sat and thought about where you are now in your career and where you want to be in the short, medium and long term? More importantly, have you ever seriously planned how you intend to get there? Employing the same level of strategic planning to brand 'Me' will undoubtedly reap rewards. Not only will it provide you with direction, but it will also assist you in developing strategies for your career development.

The first stage of this process is determining where you are now. Undertaking a brand 'Me' audit could help here. Think about your strengths and weaknesses and identify the opportunities you have for career development. This may include professional qualifications or thinking of ways to develop your existing skills and attributes. Identify opportunities in your current role that could demonstrate leadership; or think of projects that would help in your personal development. Also consider what factors could act as barriers.

Next, think about where you want to be. Where do you see yourself in 2 years, 5 years and 10 years' time? What role do you see yourself doing? Think about the organisation you are working for and whether they will be able to provide you with the career development opportunities to get you where you want to be.

Finally, think about how you are going to get there. Establish objectives and make them SMART.

- Specific – in exactly the same way that you would set objectives for any brand make sure your own objectives are clear and precise.
- Measurable – ensure the outcomes can be measured.
- Achievable – Be realistic in what you can achieve. Set targets that are possible in the timescale.
- Relevant – make sure the objectives you set for yourself are appropriate. You don't want to waste time and effort on objectives that may not enhance your career.
- Timely – give yourself deadlines within which you intend to achieve the objectives. Enlist a trusted friend to hold you to account on the goals you set yourself. That way it is more difficult to let the deadline pass.

Setting SMART objectives for yourself can be quite daunting, especially if you are starting out in your career. It can be extremely beneficial to seek out a mentor who is willing to provide some guidance and help you identify relevant objectives for your career path. Don't be afraid to look outside your own organisation for someone whom you admire in your profession. If they have managed to navigate their way to the top perhaps they may have some useful advice on how you can advance your own career.