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be to make your voice heard: your unique voice. Voice is the contribution made to something larger than oneself. It's the medium for sharing one's purpose, values, talents and vision for the future. Yes, there are plenty of examples in contemporary society of people creating a shallow brand seemingly for the sole purpose of increasing the number of social media followers. But, before you too hastily follow that line of thinking, consider the bigger picture—and your values. Where do you want your name and legacy to appear in people's minds and hearts?

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There are plenty of reasons to care about your brand, and high among them should be to make your voice heard: your unique voice. *Voice* is the contribution made to something larger than oneself. It's the medium for sharing one's purpose, values, talents and vision for the future.

Yes, there are plenty of examples in contemporary society of people creating a shallow brand seemingly for the sole purpose of increasing the number of social media followers. But, before you too hastily follow that line of thinking, consider the bigger picture—and your values. Where do you want your name and legacy to appear in people's minds and hearts?

Some of the most fundamental elements of a value-rich personal brand are reflected in the 4Cs of brand management:

**1. Conviction.** How do your values show themselves in your life? In the way you carry yourself? In your conversations, friendships, choices? How do others know what you stand for? People with strong brands—those who are most influential and apt to attract followers and allies—are mission-driven. Their words and deeds are predictably consistent with their values. Conviction is more than a noble concept; it's about having an unimpeachable character that is, and is understood by others to

be, working in the service of something greater than yourself. Again, what is the

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his remarks. Brown walked away from the staged microphone and into the crowd because, as he stated, “my concern is that the members of our community hear me and be heard.”

People who are most in control of their brand are able to keep small the gap between how they see themselves and how others see them. Research shows that with ascension in titular leadership this becomes more difficult, particularly because there is less access to the unfettered truth.

Simply, the higher one goes up the proverbial ladder, the smaller the peer group becomes. Fewer peers means there are less people willing (often because of fear of reprisal) to share honest perspectives about the behaviors that need to stop or be changed. Without access to this feedback, and with ascension, it is easy to only pay attention to the limited, and affirmative, feedback received.

Over time, and as people are expected to perform in increasingly sophisticated and politically nuanced environments, the higher the probability that past strengths will become weaknesses. A classic example of this is people who move from #2 to #1 positions in an organization. The operational strengths that helped them move through their career are no longer considered as relevant when one is expected to perform as a strategy-savvy CEO.

Caring is also—and perhaps appropriately weighted—being concerned about the impact you are having on others.

**3. Class.** “Keep it classy” is a mantra for those who sometimes forget that brand is shaped with every choice made, every word uttered. Whether choosing to act or not act a choice is being made. Even thoughts are choices—choosing to focus mental and emotional energy on certain things over others.

Classiness requires intentionality. Think of your life as a story to be displayed on a

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This desire to understand what motivates others is a key to fully fleshing out your character's role and behaviors in enacting the story. It is also the essence of building a strong personal identity—understanding yourself in relation to the needs and motives of others is one of the most effective ways to create a credible brand, a brand powerful enough to positively influence others.

**4. Confidence.** Confidence is the toughest of the Cs in this list. It can't be taught or bought; it has to be earned. There are people who are full of shallow entitlement that comes across as smug confidence. Don't pay attention to them, and certainly don't let yourself become one of them. It's transparent. They're hiding something, which will be discovered in time.

Earned confidence is beautiful to observe. It shows itself as an effortless comfort in one's being, requiring no airs. People with a deep sense of personal confidence often have many relationships, varied interests and deep passions, make an effort to stretch their boundaries and are comfortable saying no. Confidence is built through experience and relationships, and wise people invest—on an ongoing basis—in the nurturing and acquisition of both.

Here's the simple truth: perception *does* count. People make split-second judgments all the time. Taking control of your brand means that you are putting yourself in the driver's seat, making a conscious choice to intentionally reflect behaviors and choices that allow the best of you to shine.

**A couple of things to remember about managing your brand:**

1. Let go of the guilt. Not being “on” 100% of the time is okay. Sometimes people won't perceive you the way you want to be perceived. But give it your best shot anyway and know that your effort was honorable.

2. Don't be a jerk. Treat people well.

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*And remember, do what you say, you will do.*

0. Beware of overusing your strengths. In high doses, they can become flaws.

11. Choose happiness. Begin acting in accordance immediately.

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## About the Author

*DeEtta Jones is a leadership strategist, social justice advocate and author. She has more than 20 years of experience working with individual leaders and teams in some of the world's most prominent universities and corporations. Her multidimensional background and fresh perspective leaves clients feeling heard and empowered to take on some of the major organizational and workforce challenges of our times. For more information or to have DeEtta speak at your next event, please visit <http://www.deettajones.com>.*

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