A key component of networking is to be memorable and leave positive impressions in the minds of people you meet. This means acknowledging who you are and being able to effectively articulate it when communicating with people, i.e., developing and owning your personal brand. Branding is mostly used in the world of marketing and sales to help business effectively sell their products to target customers. The concept of a personal brand is quite similar except here you are trying to make yourself marketable to the professional world.

A personal brand can be understood as a “collection of perceptions” people have about your talents, passions, and experiences. Developing a personal brand is valuable since a strong reputation can open doors for new and exciting career opportunities. When people are well aware of your talents and passions, they are far more likely to tap you for relevant assignments.

Here are few strategies to get you started;

**Building your story:** The first step towards creating your personal brand is to pay closer attention to your strengths, passions, key accomplishments, and how you want your network to remember you. Start by listing keywords that describe your unique skills and experiences. Next, create a vision statement for your brand much like what successful businesses do. Then you can craft a foreseeable path to achieve your professional vision with a solid foundation of your strengths and experiences. This becomes your narrative.

**Making your narrative public:** You may assume your work will speak for your personal brand. Though except for people in your close proximity, leaders and professionals in other parts of the company may never hear about your contributions unless you take steps to communicate them. A simple tactic is to share your ideas and build your reputation through creation on social networking sites like LinkedIn and Twitter or through blogposts, personal websites, or even a corporate intranet. Remember to keep the messaging positive and focused on highlighting your professional vision.

**Take control of your story:** Some people are uncomfortable at the thought of self-promotion, but if you take control of your narrative rather than do it for you. Help others understand your uniqueness. Create a crisp elevator pitch about your personal brand and use it to tell your story when meeting new people. Connect past experiences with your present role, describe how these shaped your values and how you see yourself achieving your professional vision.

**Network, network, network:** Once you are armed with awareness and recognition of your personal brand and have communicated a consistent public message about yourself, the next step is to go build new relationships.