



**6.5 WAYS**  
TO KNOW YOUR  
BRAND IS GENERIC  
AND A PROMOTION  
OR PAY INCREASE IS  
NOT LIKELY

Michael D. Brown

Anyone who has spent a few years in a corporate setting will tell you that appraisals and promotions aren't based purely on performance. When upper management is looking at who deserves a bigger role, being the hardest worker, alone, isn't enough. It makes sense, too. You don't want the person who works the hardest to become the manager. You want the person who will be the best at managing people to be the manager. The two are often different people.

In order to be promoted, you will need to stand out. This means you need to have some special qualities which upper management remembers when they're choosing the next leader in your company. If you just become a generic brand, known only for doing the work given to you, then you won't be the next leader. Here are some indicators to determine if this has already happened to you.



## 1 – THE NEW PEOPLE IN MANAGEMENT DON'T KNOW YOU

If upper management is interested in giving you a bigger role in the company, they will make an effort to know you. Knowing you doesn't mean just knowing your name, it means making an effort to have a professional relationship with you. It means them saying hello and making small talk whenever they see you. If this isn't happening, and you seem to be a complete stranger to the people in upper management, then your brand might be becoming generic.

## 2 – YOU DON'T HAVE A SPECIALTY

Here's a quick test to see how generic you are. What is the one thing that only you can do in your organization? Is there some type of problem only you can solve? You will be considered generic if you can easily be replaced by someone else from the organization. In order to stand out, you need to have skills that can't be found in anyone else, even if the skill isn't something related to your field.



### 3 – YOUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE STRICTLY PROFESSIONAL

In an office, all of us are expected to act professionally. The reality, though, is that we are all human and, no matter how much we try, it is impossible to be completely about work the entire day. If your professional relationships are blooming into friendships, even if the friendships aren't too deep, you are good. It is a bad sign if people talk to you only about work and nothing else.

### 4 – YOU AREN'T INVITED TO MEETINGS

Everyone hates pointless meetings, but some meetings can be great for your career. Whenever upper management has a problem or is starting a new program, they want to ensure the key people in the organization know what is happening. If meetings often happen in your organization, but you aren't invited to them, it means you aren't standing out in the eyes of upper management. If they remember you during meetings, they will remember you during appraisals.

### 5 – YOUR INPUT ISN'T TAKEN WHEN CREATING POLICIES

Whenever a new policy is being implemented, people in upper management try to get as much feedback as they can to ensure the policy is right. Even if you take only a small role, upper managers will remember who you are and ask how the policy will affect you. This isn't just a sign of power – this is a sign that your brand isn't generic.



## 6 – YOU CAN TAKE A DAY OFF WITHOUT AFFECTING WORKFLOW

Being able to take a day off whenever you need to is a great thing. What is not so great is when you come back and it seems nothing was affected. If you take multiple days off and things keep going just fine without you, it means your brand has become generic. There must be some sort of a backlog of work if you have the right skills that are needed in the workplace.



### 6.5 -WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE GENERIC

If you think your brand is generic now, don't fret. You can easily fix it. The key isn't to work hard; the key is to work in a way only you can do. Learn some related skills and put them to use. Even something as small as being a whiz at Excel can make you a valuable member of the team.

## ABOUT MICHAEL D. BROWN

Michael D. Brown is a sought-after speaker, Global management expert, and author of *Fresh Passion: Get A Brand or Die A Generic*, *Fresh Customer Service®: Treat the Employee as #1 and the Customer as #2 and You Will Get Customers for Life* and *Fresh Passion Leadership: Become a Distinct, Branded Leader or Extinct Generic*.

He has over eighteen years of experience in helping companies and organizations achieve results. These organizations include US Army, US Marines, BP, Amoco, Capital One, Jason's Deli, Murphy Oil, Omni Hotels, Houston Rockets, Wells Fargo, Marriott, Ford Foundation, and Hampton University. He has held numerous leadership positions at Fortune Global 100 Companies.

Michael's work has been featured in hundreds of publications and media outlets, including: Forbes, Georgia Public Radio, Business Week, NPR Radio, The Economic Times, Black Enterprise, Management Operations, Business Education Forum, Bits and Pieces of Leadership, Inside Business, The Managers Intelligence, Black Enterprise, and U.S. Business, Review.



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