

## Research: Effects of name-dropping

Impression management is a process that should not be ignored when discussing personal branding. Experts often refer to impression management as self-presentation. The way in which someone presents him/herself varies from subtle to boastful. Seeing as 'modesty' is a highly-valued virtue in our society, boastful self-presentation will often backfire. Leberherz, Jonas and Tomljenovic even go so far as to say that when someone perceives someone else to be making an overt attempt at self-presentation, the receiver will feel manipulated. Name-dropping is a form of such overt self-presentation that might not contribute positively to a presented image.

Abovementioned authors ran a study focusing on this in Switzerland. This study saw one student introducing himself to others by email. In one set of emails he dropped the name of Roger Federer as being one of his friends. And in the email without the name-dropping (for the control group) he merely stated to be a massive Roger Federer fan.

The people receiving the name-dropping email considered the student less sympathetic than the respondents from the control group did. Respondents confronted with name-dropping also had a lower esteem of the student's competence (in a general sense, not specifically in terms of tennis ability).

This study confirmed that name-dropping is indeed counterproductive as part of self-presentation. Respondents exposed to name-dropping were suspicious of why the student had resorted to name-dropping. The overall conclusion is that receivers of such a message simply see through the name-dropping strategy, labelling that behaviour as a conscious attempt at manipulation by the sender.

### *Reference(s)*

Leberherz, C., Jonas, K., Tomljenovic, B. (2009), Are we known by the company we keep? Effects of name-dropping on first impressions. *Social Influence*, vol.4 , no.1, p.62–79. \*

\* : available in the EURIB library.