



INNOVEST SME

Accelerating Small Business

Your Personal Brand, Your Biggest Asset

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CONTENTS

	Preface	5
1	Defining Yourself (I)	7
2	Defining Yourself (II)	12
3	Controlling and Developing Your Image	17
4	Personal and Professional Influences	22
5	Sharpening Your Brand	27
6	Appearance Matters	32
7	Social Media (I)	37
8	Social Media (II)	42
9	Brand Management During a Crisis	47
10	Branding Personality Traits	52

**A personal brand
is your promise
to the marketplace
and the world.**

T O M P E T E R S

A man in a dark suit stands with his back to the camera on a wooden ledge, looking out over a vast cityscape. The city is densely packed with buildings and greenery, extending to a body of water in the distance. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall mood is contemplative and expansive.

PREFACE

In the information age, personal branding is necessary for the success of any company or individual. Failing to manage personal branding can lead to misinformation about you or your company becoming public. Taking control of your public image is no longer an option. Identifying and using the tools that affect personal branding correctly will ensure that the public sees the image that you want them to see. A positive brand is necessary for success.

**Life isn't about finding
yourself. Life is about
creating yourself.**

GEORGE BERNHARD SHAW



CHAPTER ONE

DEFINING YOURSELF (I)

You are in control of your personal brand if you choose to be. When establishing your brand, it is essential that you define yourself. Remember that perception is reality, so it is essential that you carefully cultivate your image. When you take the time to define yourself and present this definition to the public, you will reap the benefits that come with taking control of your personal branding.

IF YOU DON'T, THEY WILL

It is easy to underestimate the importance of personal branding and avoid actively participating in your brand. The truth, however, is that branding

occurs whether you participate in it or not. If you do not take the time to brand yourself, the market will brand you and it may not do it favorably. Customers can bring negative attention to a company or individual and attention can easily escalate to the court of public opinion. For example, the video “United Breaks Guitars” brought negative attention to the United Airlines brand. Without personal branding and active intervention, the damage to the brand name could have been beyond repair. Taking control of personal branding is necessary to manage your public reputation.

BRAND MANTRA

Brand mantras are short but they are powerful. This short phrase or statement may only be three to five words but these words define your brand. A mantra must explore the brand’s points of difference or how the brand is unique along with what the company represents. For example take a look at Nike’s “*Authentic Athletic Performance.*” In order to create a brand mantra, you must first identify what sets your brand apart and list your points of difference.

Once the points of difference are identified, you must create a mantra that is simple, communicates, and inspires.

- ▶ **Simple:** The mantra should be short and to the point.
- ▶ **Communicate:** The mantra should define the purpose of the brand and what is unique about it.
- ▶ **Inspire:** The mantra should be significant.

When creating a mantra, you should begin with a word bank of points of difference, your purpose and mission.

BE REAL

People are attracted to genuine people. The key to personal branding is to make it personal. Communicating dry facts will not impress most people. Your brand must have personality. Develop a persona that attracts people. Share ideas, implement humor, and make connections with people. Having an online presence makes sharing your persona much easier.

When you are developing your persona, remember to be real. You are under no obligation to share personal details about yourself, but everything that you share must be genuine. Never make up facts, statistics or tell lies. Fact checking has become easier than ever, and lies will do nothing to improve your brand's reputation.

SWOT ANALYSIS

In defining yourself, it is helpful to perform a SWOT analysis. By identifying your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, you will be able to define your brand and understand what you have to offer. You will also identify areas that need improvement.

- ▶ **Strengths:** Strengths are internal characteristics that create a competitive advantage. For example, accounting skills would be a strength.

- ▶ **Weaknesses:** Internal weaknesses that need to be improved. Disorganization would be an example of a weakness.
- ▶ **Opportunities:** Opportunities are external. There are always opportunities for you to take advantage in the marketplace. Education would be an example of an opportunity.
- ▶ **Threats:** External threats cannot be controlled, but they may be addressed in your opportunities. Competition with a more relevant skill set is a threat.

A SWOT analysis will be unique to each person or business. Taking a moment to honestly assess your situation will allow you to complete a personal SWOT analysis.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Sean created a new startup business. At first, everything seemed to be going well, and sales were 20% higher than he originally projected. Unfortunately, a dissatisfied customer began making life miserable. The customer had demanded a refund, but Sean refused because there was nothing wrong with the product. Soon, he found comments online that he had poor customer service and warning people away from his product. Sean was sure that the problem would go away on its own, but his sales fell 30% the next month.

**When you brand
yourself properly, the
competition becomes
irrelevant.**

DAN SCHWABEL

DEFINING YOURSELF (II)

In order to define yourself, you need to know yourself. Identifying your core values, passions and strengths will help you realize what you need to communicate in your brand. Once you understand what you have to offer, it will be possible to create a brand image that is both honest and positive. Defining yourself will allow others to see you clearly.

PILLARS

In branding, your pillars are your main values. They are the attributes that help define your identity. In order to identify your pillars, you must ask yourself what you stand for and what your core values are. Your pillars are



not what you have to offer; they explain how you offer what you have. For example, you may offer years of sales experience, but your pillar could be offering an honest and authentic sales experience. Remember that there are no correct or incorrect pillars; they simply need to reflect your core values.

Ask yourself what you stand for and make a list of ideas. Then, choose the main values and link them to what your brand has to offer. It is best to begin branding with one or two pillars. You can always expand in the future.

PASSIONS

Your brand should reflect your passions. Ask yourself the following questions to identify your passions:

- ▶ What do you care about?
- ▶ What drives you?
- ▶ What do you consider your passions?

Remember to list all of your passions, not just the ones that are obviously related to work. If the only passion you communicate is the desire to increase sales, you appear boring and work obsessed. People know that there is more to you than your work. Your brand needs to personalize you to other people, so a passion for art, family or the environment could only contribute to your brand. You are bound to attract people with similar

passions. You can also find ways to incorporate your passions into your work.

DEFINE YOUR STRENGTHS

Branding requires you to identify your strengths, which you already visited in your SWOT analysis. Your strengths, however, are essential in your branding, so it is important that you do not overlook any of them. It is easy to overlook personal strengths by focusing on desired attributes. Making this mistake can be disastrous and keep you from realizing your potential.

Remember to consider your natural talent when finding your personal strengths. What comes easily to you? What do you do better than other people? Also, consider aspects of your character that are natural strengths. For example, self-control, trustworthiness and intelligence are all strengths that define you and your brand.

THE THREE CS

When establishing your brand, you must remember the three Cs: Clarity, Consistency, and Constancy. Whether you are creating a personal or business brand, you will find the three Cs extremely useful.

Clarity: Your brand needs to be clear about what you do and do not represent. Are you a risk-taker or do you represent stability? Are you creative or analytical? If there is any ambiguity in your branding, you will confuse people and cause disappointment.

Consistency: Once you have clearly established your brand identity, it is important that you remain consistent. Consistency requires that you present yourself in the same light each time you communicate your brand. This consistency needs to be in your stated values and made visible in your actions.

Constancy: Your brand requires constancy, meaning that it is visibly dependable. Once you define your brand, commit to it.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Ashley was given an exercise at work to help her define her strengths. Every time that she thought of a strength, she would think again and decided that it really wasn't. Nothing that she considered a strength was related to her job description. Additionally, she thought about all of the traits that successful people at work had and that she lacked. By the end of the exercise, Ashley was convinced that she had no strengths. She lied on the answers by choosing strengths that she would like to have rather than the ones that she actually possessed.

**If you are not a brand,
you are a commodity.**

PHILIP KOTLER



CHAPTER THREE

CONTROLLING AND DEVELOPING YOUR IMAGE

This chapter will further explore the influence of the 3Cs. Remember that your brand needs to be clear and consistent, and you need to be committed to it. By following the rules of the three Cs, you will be able to control and develop your brand and your image. Once you commit to the three Cs, it will be easier to continue developing your brand.

CLEAR AND DEFINED

As we have already learned, brand descriptions must be clear and defined. There should be no ambiguity or vague qualities in your brand. Clarity

in your brand will allow people to understand what you do and do not represent. Failure to be clear about your brand is destructive. Your brand creates expectations and there will be disappointment if your brand hints at promises that you will not fulfill. Additionally, people will be more likely to embrace your brand if they fully understand what your brand is. For example, Starbucks built its brand on the promise of the “third place” or the home away from home where people can relax. There is no confusion in this idea or what it represents.

CONSISTENT IMAGE

You must make sure that your brand has consistency. If you say that you are going to do something, you need to do it. Every exposure to your brand needs to be the same as the last. Online encounters, face-to-face interactions and every other way that you connect with other people must reflect the brand that you have set forward. If your brand promises one thing online, but a physical encounter does not measure up to that image, your brand will suffer.

It is important to note that you need to choose branding wisely before you make it public. Frequent rebranding can make you appear indecisive. Once you have created your brand, you must make every effort to be consistent in its execution.

IT TAKES A COMMITMENT

Consistency takes commitment. You need to make sure that you are faithful and dependable in the execution of your brand's promises. This requires the cooperation of everyone who executes your brand. If a company promises excellent service but do not deliver on that promise, the brand will suffer. It is important that each exposure to the brand is the same for every person. For your brand to be seen as dependable, multiple encounters with other people must reflect the values and mission of your brand. By committing to execute your brand correctly, your reputation will remain positive and spread.

LIVE IT EVERY DAY

Committing to your brand requires you to take action every day. It falls in line with consistency and constancy. As we have already learned, every interaction with your brand needs to build a sense of dependability. Committing to living out your brand is the only way to make this happen and you must commit to doing it every day. How you execute day in and day out will depend on your brand and your customers. Taking from the customer service example, you would need to exercise customer service with a positive attitude and by going the extra mile for your customers. Regardless of your brand, the point is for you to follow through every day. As you do, the actions will become easier and more natural and you will be able to expand your brand's reputation.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Jennifer wanted to create a bakery with a reputation for quality. Her business partner agreed with her vision for the company. At first, the bakery's reputation was positive as Jennifer worked 18 hour days cooking and serving her customers. Six months after opening, Jennifer left town for a few weeks to handle some family business, leaving her partner in charge. While she was gone, the customer reviews began to spiral downwards. She returned to find her business partner had stocked the kitchen with premade items to save on labor and cost. Jennifer was furious and wondered how she would get back the customers who no longer trusted her product.

If people like you, they
will listen to you, but if
they trust you, they'll do
business with you.

ZIG ZIGLAR

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCES

You are constantly presenting your brand to other people, both in your personal and professional life. It is important that you understand how your personal brand and your professional brand reflect each other. When you are able to integrate them successfully, you will be able to use your brand to further your personal and professional life.

CORPORATE AND PERSONAL INTEGRATION

It is easy to believe that your personal life is completely separate from your professional life. Your personal brand, however, will intersect with



your corporate brand, and the values of each need to reflect each other. Consider how the reputations of professionals are ruined by personal scandals. If your personal brand conflicts with your professional, distrust for both your personal and professional brand will develop.

While you should try to integrate your personal and professional brands at all times, you must be particularly careful in certain situations. Behavior at public events, for example, needs to reflect your brand. Additionally, you should exercise restraint when using social media. No matter your privacy settings, nothing online is private. What you say on your personal Twitter account needs to positively reflect your company's brand and your personal brand. If you must vent your frustrations, do so in a private setting that will not reflect poorly on you.

THEY WILL INFLUENCE EACH OTHER

Your personal and professional brands will influence each other. We are used to stories of a personal brand affecting a professional brand. There are, however, ways that your professional brand will influence your personal brand. While we are accustomed to stories of negative influence, it is important to remember that the influence may also be positive. For example, a CEO who performs a charitable act at work would influence his personal brand. People would view the personal brand in a positive light. You must be mindful of how each brand will draw influences from the other.

BE A PROFESSIONAL

When developing your personal and professional brands it is important that you exhibit professionalism. Be a professional both in and out of the office. In order to behave professionally, you need to define professional behavior. Not everyone defines professionalism the same way. Some people are more rigid in their views and others are more relaxed. There are, however, a few different ways to behave professionally that most people would agree are professional.

Professional behavior:

- ▶ Be dependable.
- ▶ Be competent in your work.
- ▶ Act with honesty and integrity.
- ▶ Treat everyone with respect.
- ▶ Be a positive example.

This list is not inclusive, but it is a good starting point. By behaving professionally in your personal and professional life, you will help create a brand that is respected.

BUILD RAPPORT

Part of personal branding requires building rapport. When you build rapport with people, you have the chance to develop a cross promotion between

your personal and professional life that will lead to opportunities as you show your brand to potential employers, employees, and customers.

How to Build a Rapport:

- ▶ **Consider your appearance:** Dress professionally.
- ▶ **Find mutual interest:** Discover common ground.
- ▶ **Exhibit honesty:** Be truthful in your interactions.
- ▶ **Show empathy:** Connect with people on an emotional level.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Mitch always tried to behave professionally at work, but he completely relaxed when he was off of work. He went on a business trip with a couple of colleagues, and every night after work, he went out to enjoy himself. One night, he had far too much to drink and tweeted some questionable pictures. The next day, they were scheduled to travel back. One of his colleague joked that Mitch certainly knew how to relax. The other seemed unnerved. Mitch's boss contacted him immediately after the plane landed and asked to see him immediately. At the office, Mitch was shown his tweets and told that his actions jeopardized the reputation of the entire company. He was on placed on final notice, and any further unprofessional behavior would cost him his job.

**Absorb what is useful,
reject what is useless,
add what is specifically
your own.**

BRUCE LEE

SHARPENING YOUR BRAND

There are many ways that you can sharpen your brand. By using the tools available to you, you have the opportunity to strengthen your brand and its influence over others. For example, you should take advantage of the opportunity to share ideas and influence others by blogging. By being transparent and authentic in your communication, you will attract people to you and to your brand.

BLOGGING

Blogging is an excellent way to draw people to your brand when it is done correctly. Unfortunately, you can repel people when you blog incorrectly. If



you choose to blog, you must write about your passion. This passion will translate to your audience. In order for your personal brand to develop with your blog, you need to provide your biography. An anonymous blog will do little to increase your reputation online.

How to Blog:

- ▶ Make a clear point – Only blog if you have something to share.
- ▶ Be thorough – Proofread your posts for accuracy and grammar.
- ▶ Update consistently – Update your blog on a regular basis.

Blogs should not be created on a whim. They require time and effort, but they are worth the investment.

AUTHENTICITY IS KEY

Regardless of how you choose to portray your brand, authenticity is key. It is not easy to fake being authentic. People are becoming more savvy at identifying authenticity and they are drawn to it. While authenticity might seem like an easy message to convey, many people fail to be authentic in their brands. There are specific actions you can take to improve your authenticity:

- ▶ **Honesty:** Being authentic requires being honest about your values and ideas.
- ▶ **Promote causes:** Authenticity requires action. Supporting charities and causes that align with your values shows your commitment to your values.

- ▶ **Show consistency:** Back up your words with your actions at every opportunity and do not deviate from your core message.

TRANSPARENCY

Being transparent is a difficult task for most people. Transparency requires living your life and conducting your business in the open. Secrecy will cause people to become suspicious and suspicion leads to misinformation. If you do not tell people the truth, they will create stories to explain what they do know. Transparency does not require you to share every intimate detail of your life, but it does demand you to be open and honest.

Transparency:

- ▶ Be transparent in business finances. (To a point)
- ▶ Be transparent in your communication. (Avoid double talk)
- ▶ Share your personal life. (To a point)
- ▶ Be transparent in your business decisions.

When you are transparent with your personal and professional brand, you gain the trust of your audience.

NETWORKING

Networking is a necessary aspect of any brand. As the saying goes, “It is who you know.” This is particularly true when you are developing your brand. Networking can be a great boost to your brand when done

correctly. When it is not done correctly, it is a waste of time. There are a few steps you can take to help develop your networking skills:

- ▶ **Meet people:** Take advantage of networking opportunities to meet new people; do not stay exclusively within your social circle.
- ▶ **Collaborate:** Work with others to showcase your skills.
- ▶ **Develop an elevator speech:** An elevator speech is a brief introduction of 30 seconds to a minute. You need to include your name, qualifications, and how you can be useful.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Gary decided to create a blog for self-promotion. He focused on his main tasks at work, which he considered rather boring. The first blog post did not elicit many responses. In fact, there was only one response and it was lackluster. He continued working on the blog and promoting it among his colleagues. Unfortunately, the reception remained lukewarm. After a few weeks, Gary blogged about his company's charity walk, a cause that he greatly supported. For the first time, there were multiple responses, and most of them encouraged him to continue writing similar posts.

**Be yourself, everyone
else is already taken.**

OSCAR WILDE

APPEARANCE MATTERS

Like it or not, appearance is an important part of any brand. Your appearance matters. Remember that first impressions and the way that you dress will affect the way people perceive you and your brand. It is important that your appearance reflects your brand and gives off the image that you want to portray to the public. Taking the time and effort to develop your appearance will greatly improve your brand's reputation.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First impressions only happen once, and they happen quickly. We are hardwired to make fast decisions and research shows that we



make decisions about people within seven seconds of meeting them. Appearance, verbal cues and nonverbal cues all contribute to our perception of other people. So, how do people see you? What type of first impression do you make? Ask yourself these questions before meeting new people.

Fortunately, today's technology and the rise of digital communication provide the opportunity to get to know people before meeting them in person. However, this is not an excuse to let appearance go. You'll never know when you are going to run into someone for the first time.

RISE OUT OF THE CROWD

If you want to distinguish your brand from others, you need to stand out. It is important, however, that you are memorable for all the right reasons. No one wants to stand out as the crazy person who lacks social skills and wore two different shoes to a conference. You need to stand out in positive ways:

How to Stand Out:

- ▶ Dress well
- ▶ Give unique opinions
- ▶ Be helpful
- ▶ Be confident
- ▶ Showcase your personality
- ▶ Create your own method for doing things

You must remember that rising out of a crowd is a risk. You will be noticed by other people, so make sure that you are noticed for all of your best attributes.

TRUE REFLECTION

Your outward appearance needs to reflect who you are inside. Unfortunately, stress can cause people to give the wrong impression in their facial expressions and body language. What image do your facial expressions and body language portray about you?

Negative body language:

- ▶ Lack of eye contact
- ▶ Fidgeting
- ▶ Yawning
- ▶ Hunching over
- ▶ Not smiling

Positive body language:

- ▶ Eye contact
- ▶ Smiling
- ▶ Slightly leaning in during conversation
- ▶ Nodding

It is important to pay attention to what your body image is saying. You want to give off a positive impression that reflects your brand.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

While it is true that professional attire is much more relaxed than it used to be, clothes still matter. The way a person dresses is not a reflection of his or her capabilities, but people are still judged by the way they look. A neat, clean, professional appearance is necessary for people to take you seriously. This does not mean that you have to wear drab, boring clothes. Simply take the time to put yourself together.

- ▶ Clothing should fit well. Avoid revealing cuts.
- ▶ Make sure that your clothes are clean, pressed, and free of lint.
- ▶ Manicure your nails.
- ▶ Hair should be neat and clean.

Dressing for success involves careful planning. You should choose your outfits ahead of time so that you are not surprised by hidden stains or missing buttons. You should also get up early so that you can dress without having to rush out the door half finished.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Holly was running late the day of her job interview. She had 10 minutes to change out of the clothes she wore to her job at a fast food restaurant before she had to leave. The outfit that she planned on wearing was dirty, so she chose a slightly rumpled dress. She pulled back her greasy hair and managed to put on a little mascara and lip gloss before leaving. Holly barely made it to the interview on time. She ran in breathlessly as strands of her hair began to slip out of the clip.

You shouldn't
brand yourself
online without
discovering what
is at the core of your
personal brand.

JILL CELESTE

SOCIAL MEDIA (I)

Social media is an excellent way to improve your brand's presence. You must, however, use social media correctly in order for it to be effective. It is not enough for you to have social media accounts. You need have a specific purpose for your accounts and monitor them closely. It is also imperative that you implement security as you promote your brand.

NEEDS CONSTANT MONITORING

Social media requires constant monitoring. If you do not pay attention to your social media accounts, they will not do you any good. When using social media, open accounts that are relevant to you and your business.

It is difficult to juggle numerous social media accounts. Once you are actively using social media, be sure to check your accounts regularly. You can also implement different tools to track your social media presence. Google alerts are a useful tool to monitor your social media accounts. Some tools are paid and others are free.

Free Tracking Tools:

- ▶ Hootsuite
- ▶ Viralheat
- ▶ Trendrr

SECURITY

Everyone with an online presence needs to focus on internet security. Being secure while using social media requires more than virus software. You need to use all of the security tools available to you such as secure passwords and two-factor authentications or a 2-step verification process.

Using two-factor authentications will keep your password safe. In this process, you enter your password and a verification code is sent to your phone. The account cannot be accessed without the code. To save time, you may establish your home computer so that the code is not needed to log in on that computer. Since the code is needed for other locations, it becomes more difficult to hack the account.

Choosing secure passwords and using different passwords for each account will improve security. A secure password is typically 8 to 10 characters and includes all of the following:

- ▶ Uppercase letters
- ▶ Lowercase letters
- ▶ Numbers
- ▶ Symbols or characters

HAVE AN OBJECTIVE

People who fail or are not completely successful using social media, often only use it for general self-promotion. While social media is great for self-promotion, you need to have a clear objective in what you are promoting and how you promote it. Why are you there? What are you trying to promote? How does it translate to your brand?

If you only share self-glorifying posts of your triumphs, you lose your authenticity. Take your objectives from your pillars and find ways to reach them. For example, if you are passionate about fair trade, share your experiences and link to other articles, blogs etc. Having an objective helps you to establish a network of followers with similar ideas.

PROMOTE

Promoting your social media sites takes time and effort on your part. There are many ways that you can increase the visibility of your brand

using social media. The first step is to create the same message and theme throughout all of your social media sites, Your Tumblr and your Facebook should not share conflicting information; they should promote each other. Certain tools allow you to link the same post to multiple sites. They should also have a similar look, color scheme, and feel to them.

You need to drive awareness of your brand by attracting people to you. The more connections you make, the more exposure you have. Don't be afraid to include links in your content. Additionally, SEO can be implemented to improve your visibility. Find useful search terms and integrate them into your content to increase your search rankings. Running an SEO campaign is more complex than this, but choosing useful keywords is an excellent starting point.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Terry opened several social media sites for the startup. She had no interest in social media, but people told her it was the only way to stay in business. She posted daily for the first two weeks. Soon, however, she became too busy to pay attention to her social media accounts. She checked back in after three months and found several flattering comments. She also discovered a complaint that was a month old. The customer was so frustrated by being ignored that he ranted on all of her accounts. Terry wondered why he had not tried to call her if he was so upset.

**Make your life one
giant networking event.**

DAN SCHWABEL

SOCIAL MEDIA (II)

Social media is changing the way that people communicate. Its influence is undeniable, but it needs to be managed correctly. Your online presence is a direct reflection of your brand. By learning to use social media, you will be able to increase the presence of your brand and your social network. It simply takes a little effort.

IT'S A TOOL

Social media may seem like a way of life, but it is a tool. Like any other tool, there is a learning curve. In order to use the social media effectively,

you need to practice. Experiment with different styles of communication until you find the one that best reflects your brand. Get feedback from your friends, and improve with every entry or share.

Social Media Tips:

- ▶ Clearly establish what you want to communicate.
- ▶ Use attention grabbing vocabulary.
- ▶ Use stories to engage people.
- ▶ Encourage readers to action.

CONTENT IS KING

Everyone is familiar with the phrase “content is king”. It is not enough to simply create content, you have to make sure that it is good content. Your content needs to have a clear point that is relevant to your brand. Once you find a relevant topic, you have to communicate your opinions well.

How to Create Content:

- ▶ **Be relevant:** Stay informed on the latest trends that affect your brand. Writing about an old story is not likely to engage an audience.
- ▶ **Use variety:** Use both written and video content. Not everyone is skilled at writing.

- ▶ **Communicate well:** Make sure that your content is well written and factual. Make sure that videos are edited properly.

HAVE A GIMMICK

Having social media sites are not enough to set you apart. Almost everyone has a social media account. A useful way to stand out is to create a gimmick. Gimmicks are not for everyone. If you do not want to use gimmicks, it is better to leave them alone. Better no gimmick than a poorly executed one. A gimmick is often a trick or some type of device to catch attention. You typically see it in advertising. Your brand will determine the type of gimmick that would work best for you.

Types of Gimmicks:

- ▶ Humorous
- ▶ Generous (give away)
- ▶ Create mystery
- ▶ Give demonstrations

By using the right gimmick, you will be able to set your brand apart from your competitors' brands.

DON'T IGNORE ANY MENTIONS

Social media helps people connect with each other. While it may seem unimportant, you must engage with everyone who reaches out to you. If you ignore people on social media, you are damaging your brand. It is

essential that you address every positive and negative mention that you come across. Positive mentions are easy to address. You thank them for taking the time to provide positive feedback, not everyone takes the time to do this. When handling negative mentions, you need to begin by addressing misinformation. You should also apologize if you are in the wrong. Addressing online mentions will connect you with your audience and improve your brand's reputation.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

At a seminar, Delia learned the value of producing content. So, she decided to start blogging and linking it to her social network daily. The only problem with this decision was that she did not have much time to devote to the activity. Still, she was determined to produce content. Delia's first few blogs appeared without any comments or fanfare. After the fifth blog, the grammar police appeared. Her content was questioned and her writing style shredded. Delia's blogs were all first drafts; so, much of the criticism was well founded. She did not believe that her writing style would have made much of an impact when she began the endeavor.

Your brand is what
people say about you
when you are not
in the room.

J E F F B E Z O S

BRAND MANAGEMENT DURING A CRISIS

You brand will face a crisis, no matter how prepared or well organized you are. When a crisis comes, you need to know how to handle the situation. Keep your head in a crisis and respond carefully. Acting precipitously will only damage your reputation and your brand. By addressing the problem head on, you will be able to mitigate the damage to your brand.

CAUGHT IN A BAD SPOT?

There may come a time when you find yourself in a bad spot. For example, you could upload mistaken information in your area of expertise. You could also act against your own advice. Regardless of what you do to



damage your reputation, never avoid facing your mistakes. You must take control of the situation and the message using specific steps:

- ▶ Act quickly and apologize
- ▶ Explain your error in judgment
- ▶ Learn from your mistakes

It is essential that you do not allow your mistakes to define you. Once you address the problem, you need to move on and continue expanding your brand.

NEVER BURN A BRIDGE

In difficult situations, you may be tempted to burn bridges, but you should NEVER do this. Burning bridges is breaking ties with difficult people, be they at work or in your social network. When you burn a bridge, you walk away from someone with no hope of salvaging the relationship. Burning bridges at work can negatively affect your employment record. Burning bridges within your social group can do more than cost friends; it can create enemies.

Burning Bridge Alternatives:

- ▶ Wait to communicate until your anger has passed.
- ▶ Thank the person for his or her feedback.
- ▶ Consider your fault in the situation.
- ▶ Take space in the relationship without breaking ties.

INFORMATION

Problems in personal branding often stem from problems in communication. Miscommunication and misinformation happen regularly and they can destroy your personal brand. It is essential that you address communication errors immediately and squelch rumors before they spread. Once a negative rumor spreads, it is difficult to stop the gossip train. This is why you need to monitor your online presence carefully.

Examples of misinformation:

- ▶ Business rumors
- ▶ Misquotations
- ▶ False claims
- ▶ Incorrect statistics

The best way to handle this situation is with the truth. Address the source of the misinformation directly, and be sure to spread the truth throughout all of your public platforms.

MONITOR AND RESPOND

You must carefully monitor every crisis situation because time is of the essence. Gather all information about your brand as it appears online. Google alerts and other tools are useful for this task. You need to be aware of the situation in order to respond appropriately. When you find errors being reported, you need to respond immediately.

Your response will depend on the message that you found. For example, you may need to clarify the information to someone who posted about your brand. You could also need to confront someone with truth when everything said is false. It is important that you do not attack people in your responses. Your goal is to present the truth, not go on a personal crusade.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Beth was stunned when a colleague told her that the information on her blog was inaccurate. The post had been one of her most popular. She looked at the post carefully and realized that the error was minor. She did not think that it really conflicted with the message she was trying to portray. Beth decided to leave the post alone. The next day, her mistake had been pointed out in the comments section. She decided to ignore the problem and hope for the best.

**Why fit in when you
are born to stand out?**

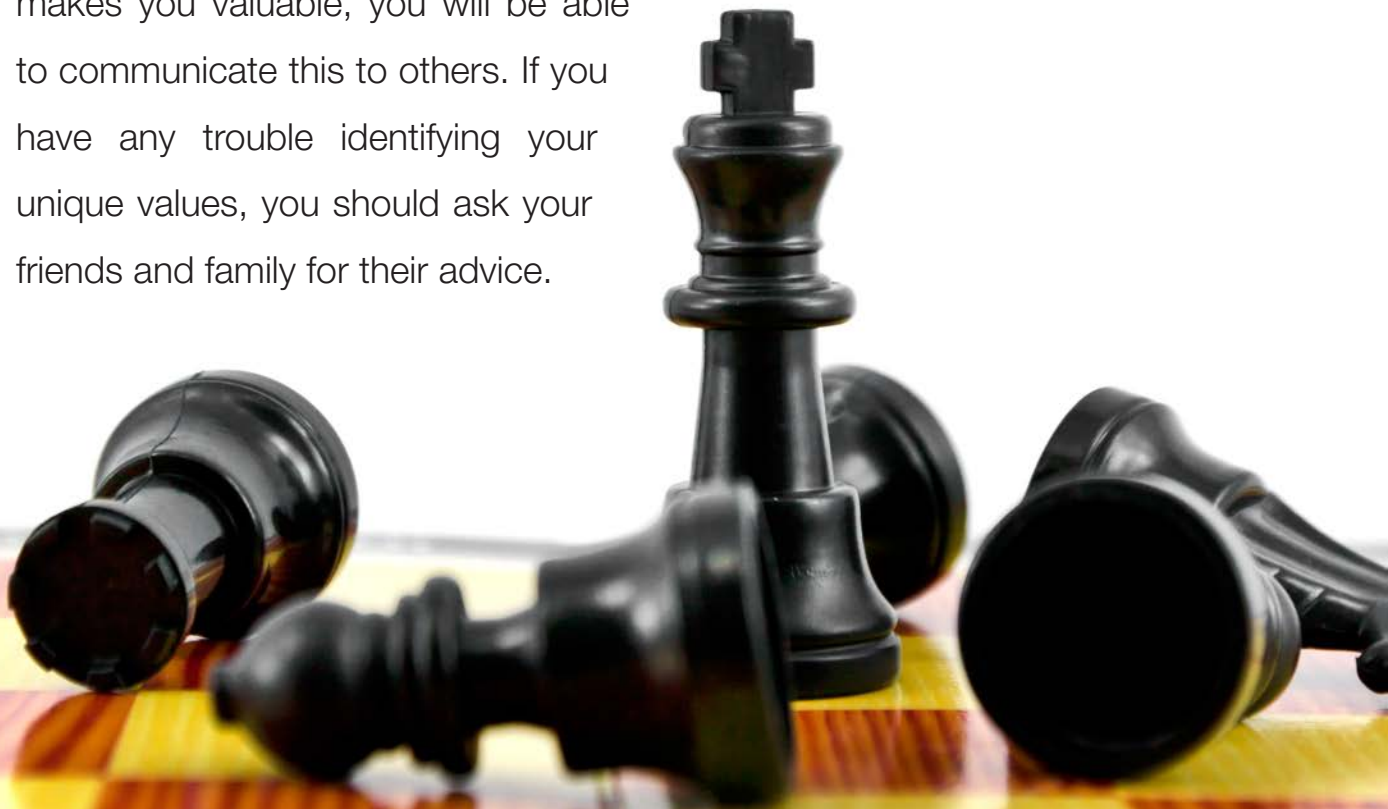
DR. SEUSS

BRANDING PERSONALITY TRAITS

Brands need personality. Fortunately, you have the perfect opportunity to develop your brand and personality: yourself. The traits that your brand exhibits are completely up to you. When you identify your unique values and boldly look outside the box, your brand will have clear personality.

IDENTIFY YOUR UNIQUE VALUES

When branding personality traits, you need to identify what makes you unique. What makes you stand out in the crowd? This could be anything. For example, you could identify your creativity, outgoing personality, confidence, courage, or curiosity. Once you identify what makes you valuable, you will be able to communicate this to others. If you have any trouble identifying your unique values, you should ask your friends and family for their advice.



BE BOLD

Branding personality traits requires you to be bold. You cannot be shy in the efforts to expand your brand. You need to engage people in your brand and inspire their confidence. An excellent way you can do this is to use powerful words to describe yourself.

Examples of powerful words:

- ▶ Accomplished
- ▶ Insightful
- ▶ Leader
- ▶ Successful
- ▶ Independent

Some people will struggle with being bold, but it is not negotiable. People who lack the confidence to be bold can benefit from following the “fake it till you make” technique. There are also classes specifically geared to help introverts connect.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Thinking outside the box can facilitate the successful use of personal branding. Thinking outside the box requires you to take risks to promote your brand. There are a few simple ways to help you think outside of the box with your branding:

- ▶ Focus what you are trying to express.
- ▶ Brainstorm unconventional ways to communicate your idea.
- ▶ Consider ways to implement your idea.

Once you have brainstormed ideas, narrow them down to your top choice.

FAIL. LEARN. REPEAT.

You will face failure in life and your personal branding is no exception. You need to practice the process of fail, learn, and repeat. When you face failure, take the opportunity to learn from your mistakes and create learning moments. It is important that you recognize learning moments when they occur. These are organic learning moments when something makes sense without having to be explained. Once you learn from your mistakes, you are less likely to repeat them. If you repeat this process each time that you fail, you will continue to learn from your mistakes and create a stronger brand.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

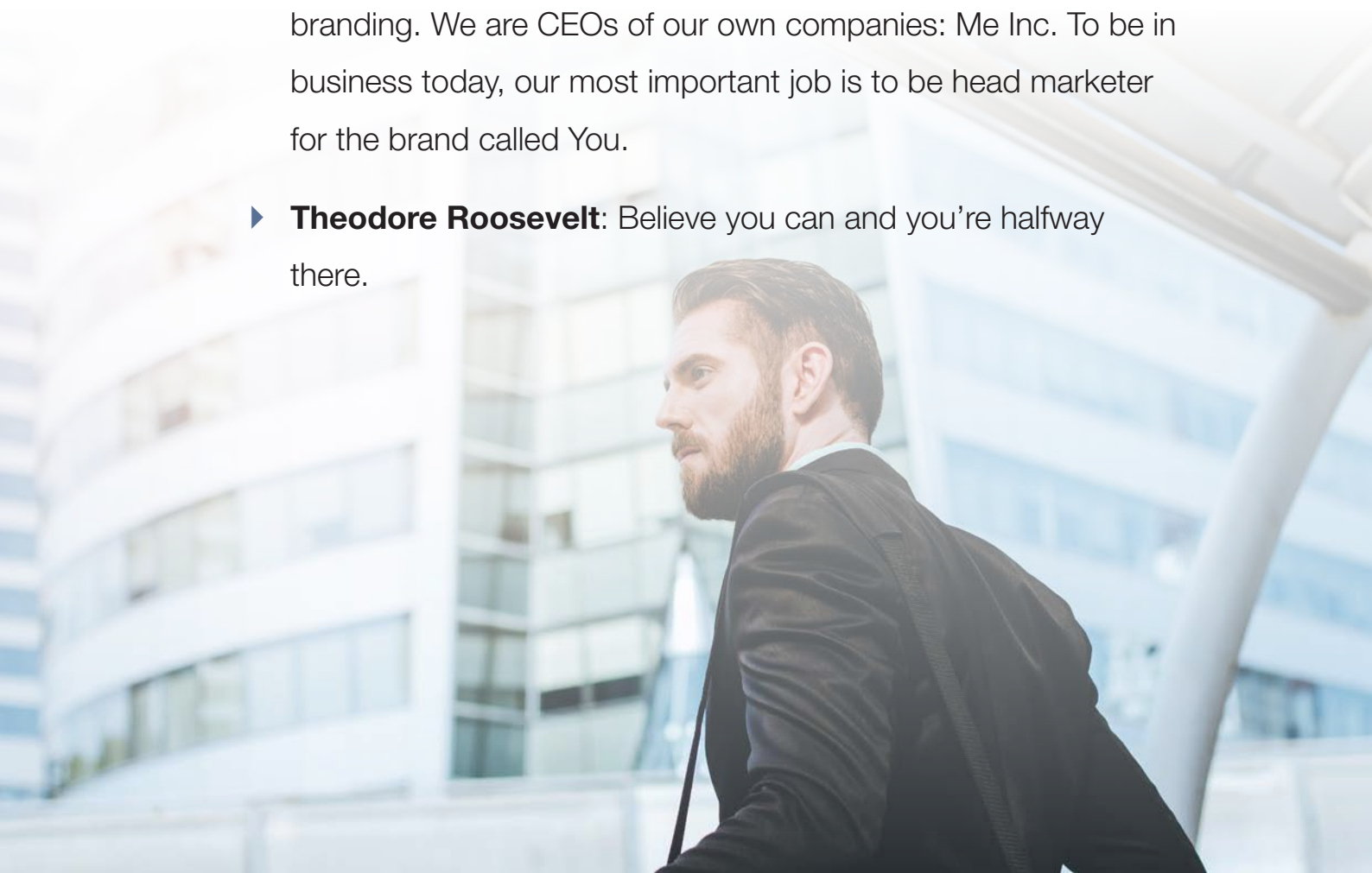
William knew that he had a good brand, but he was having difficulty establishing his reputation. He used all of the tried and true methods to get attention, including cold calling, emails, blogs, and social media. His brand just never seemed to stand out. William decided that he needed to do something outrageous. He chose to give away the product free at advertised times throughout the week. By the end of the week, discussions about his product began to increase online.

**If opportunity doesn't
knock, build a door.**

MILTON BERLE

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- ▶ **Tim Ferriss:** Personal branding is about managing your name — even if you don't own a business — in a world of misinformation, disinformation and semi-permanent Google records. Going on a date? Chances are that your “blind” date has Googled your name. Going to a job interview? Ditto.
- ▶ **Sir Richard Branson:** Branding demands commitment; commitment to continual re-invention; striking chords with people to stir their emotions; and commitment to imagination. It is easy to be cynical about such things, much harder to be successful.
- ▶ **Tom Peters:** All of us needs to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You.
- ▶ **Theodore Roosevelt:** Believe you can and you're halfway there.





Rick Chisholm made history when he single-handedly changed the professional Audio Visual industry by breaking all the rules and capitalised over 50% market share in Australia with very little capital, no partners, mergers or lenders and set up the first franchise operation of its kind in the world in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

As a 7x founder of companies and 30x businesses such as Innovest, AI Machine, Lightsounds, LSW, Light Emotion with revenue in excess of \$300 million and having employed more than 1,000 staff over the last 35 years. Rick is known as the Start-Up and SME Guru and is Author of a number of books including Business Success for Life. Unlike many mentors, he actually walks the talk and has a number of businesses under management in such areas as Automation, Events management, Importing, Distribution, Retailing and E-commerce.

His BIG passion is Business Education empowering Businesses Owners through knowledge and skills. Whilst Rick has experienced great success, he has also endured many failures. Rick has faced and overcome the exact same challenges you are facing now.



Tala Chisholm is an SME specialist who has owned and managed several small to medium sized businesses in the last 20 years, several of which were eventually sold. She has extensive experience in the fields of retail, franchising, licensing, dealerships, education, importing, distribution and consulting.

Her expertise lies in building and implementing customised cross-platform database and software solutions for businesses, automation, IT, web marketing, advertising, graphic design, business administration, process refinement and implementation. Her business experience ranges from bricks-and-mortar Giftware retailing to highly technical fields such as Security, CCTV, Entertainment Lighting and Audio sales, hire and installations as well as e-commerce.

Throughout her career she also trained and mentored Franchise business owners as well as internal division managers. Some areas of training included retail operations, management practices, business strategy, accounting, cash-flow, marketing, customer service and IT. She has also headed up the drafting of Operating Compliance Manuals for Franchise operations and implementation of all the elements involved.



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