

Why build a personal brand?

By David Royston-Lee

You may not know it – but you already have a brand. As Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, once said, “Your brand is what people say about you when you’re not in the room.”

The use of marketing terminology on individuals is growing in popularity. There is even a ‘Personal Branding Network’ on LinkedIn, the widely used social and business networking site. In August 2009 Paris Hilton has been offered £1m to talk on the subject in the states. She might not be the best proponent of ‘good’ personal branding, but it shows how much, at least in the States, people are interested in the subject!

Why?

Simply because this way of promoting works and why wouldn’t it? It has the best brains

in marketing communication around the globe working on it! In today’s Western world where ‘time famine’ is a recognised malaise, people do not have the time to ‘check out’ new providers; they would much rather stay with the ones they trust. This is even truer when it comes to individuals. A person’s reputation is all-important in a world where trust is in short supply.

This is doubly true in the credit crunch we are all facing – people are uneasy about making the wrong decision and putting their own reputation at risk. Going with the tried and tested is becoming even more prevalent...and this is exacerbated by the

fact you can’t even trust banks nowadays! From an individual point of view it is no longer true that if you are good at what you do and have a great track record in your chosen field of work that you are ‘safe’.

Visibility is becoming increasingly important.

Our own research from the last recession (and equally true today) has shown that it is those who promote themselves best that keep their job.

Networking is vital – you must ensure everyone is aware of your talents, and not just within your organisation but also in

your sector. There is a paramount need now for the need for **reputation** and **reach**.

The world is getting smaller all the time, you can happily communicate with anyone anywhere in the world with social networking sites making it even easier to do so. It is, however, becoming increasingly difficult to rely on old ways of promoting yourself, ie, that colourful bow tie just isn't enough to get you noticed anymore!

Being aware of your own brand, ie, what you have to offer; your value to others, is vitally important to keep ahead of the game in today's business world. And it isn't about simply deciding on a brand that you think will work for you. The growing importance of **trust** means that our personal brands must be developed upon authenticity.

So how do you develop a brand?

In 'Brand You' we give you both the process and the exercises to understand the real, authentic you and show you (once you are clear about 'who I am') how to keep visible through marketing yourself - just like what has been going on with products for over 100 years.

The first exercise is one of the most important: Understanding your Talents. Here we concentrate on talents rather than skills because talents are innate, whereas skills are learned. To be really good at something you need to have a real talent for it, and, for most people, using their talents is also energy giving, allowing you to stand out from others.

This exercise starts to build a picture of your unique talents, so you can explain for example, how *you* specifically lead people, manage them and ensure corporate goals are met.

In today's world we all suffer from a lack of time to make decisions on which products to buy, and tend to go with those brands that we personally like and feel we can trust. Keeping yourself visible is an imperative; you cannot afford not to be promoting your brand, extending both your reputation and reach.

The scary thing is if you are not in the flow of the connections going on all around the world you are in danger of disappearing from view...

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Exercise: Understanding Your Talents

Reflect on your life to date and identify seven occasions you consider *high points* or *peak experiences*. These are memories of times that give you a great sense of pleasure or achievement. They are times that are particularly meaningful for you.

High points or peak experiences

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

If you have more than seven high points (which we hope you have!), select those that stand out. Be careful not to simply identify events that you consider socially acceptable or likely to impress people.

Consider each in turn and ask yourself:

Which talents was I using the most?

How was I using them?

Where was I using them?

Who was I with when I was using them?

Then ask yourself:

What **themes** emerge from this exercise in terms of my talents?

Which do I enjoy using the most?

With what kind of people?

And in what type of situation?



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David's background is in business psychology, recruitment, management consulting and marketing communication. He is a recognised expert in the field of career management and has worked discretely with senior level clients specifically for over 15 years. He successfully works across all functions as his expertise is in helping clients develop greater awareness of their talents values and purpose. He previously worked for KPMG as Head of Career Management Services; Ogilvy and Mather as Human Resources Director and the CAM Foundation as Chief Executive. David is a Freeman of The City of London, a Member of the English Speaking Union and a founder member of the Association of Business Psychologists.

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