



# Brand you

by Tamara Lemos Ebersohn

**The** principles that apply to product or company branding can be applied to people in order to create a personal brand. In the way that traditional brands rely on image, identity and reputation, a personal brand uses these to form relationships and credibility with a target market.

A personal brand is a reflection of you and determines what you do 24/7. "Think of your brand as what people say about you when you are not there to defend your reputation," says Jenny Handley of Jenny Handley Performance, author of *Raise your Profile*.

It is vital not to think of your personal brand as a façade. Rather focus your brand on internal competencies, standards and style and showing them to the world in a way which adds value.

## Competencies

People expect certain actions from you based on your knowledge, experience and skills. Focus on what you are really good at and create a reputation as an expert.

## Standards

These are the values in which you believe. These are specific to you and you need to realise that there are people who will not agree with your values.

However, once you, as a personal brand, have taken a stance on a particular value it is important to keep true to that standard. If you start to waiver then your brand will be shown as untrustworthy and fake.

While a brand is about how others perceive you, Handley says that people must understand themselves and their values to be successful in creating their personal brand. "You need to love yourself and what you do in order to attract work that you love."

## Style

Style is your brand's personality. It represents how your brand is physically shown to your target market. Factors that influence style are the way you walk, speak, present yourself and



Jenny Handley

## Example of a good personal brand

Oprah loved to talk from the time that she was little. She used that as a strength and today she is a beloved talk show hostess with a strong personal brand. What others may perceive as a weakness became her strength. •



behave. It also includes the type of business card you have and the way your company looks.

Style is socially important because strong social skills, the ability to cooperate, lead and organise other people can increase the likelihood of your brand being a strong, memorable brand.

## Managing your brand

To manage a personal brand you will need to spend 75% of your time leveraging strengths, 20% of time looking for challenges and 5% of your time being different. Also remember to manage the negative attributes of your brand, such as poor public speaking abilities or shyness.

## Get publicity

A brand that is not in the public eye does not have much value. To get your message to your target market you will need to develop a profile in your industry as an expert.

Editorial coverage is important for creating a good public profile as it lends credibility to your positioning in the marketing. Approach trade magazines by sending them good content which they can use as long as they publicise your contact details. Alternatively you could promote yourself to be interviewed as an expert for articles.

Depending on your brand, Handley also recommends making use of online media if it is suitable.

## What happens when a brand goes bad?

While personal branding is an important tool for career development and to get new opportunities as an entrepreneur it is also important to be careful with the image that you are trying to portray.

Unsuccessful personal brands tend to happen when a person does not care about their reputation, is arrogant or is afraid of being interpreted as being

arrogant. Handley cites Nigel Pierce, a Western Cape DJ, as a case study of both a bad and a good personal brand.

Pierce made a name for himself with his controversial presenting style. However, while he was popular with listeners he was repeatedly fired from various stations or sponsorships because of his erratic and thoughtless opinions and behaviour.

## “You need to be credible and professional”

He soon realised that he would need to gain control of his personal brand in order to further his career and gain longevity. He approached Handley to help him. By managing his negative aspects and focusing on portraying his good values and competencies, he was able to turn his image and reputation around. He is now a sought after master of ceremonies and is well known in the community for adding value and doing charity work. **S**

For more information call  
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## Personal branding for employees

Personal branding does not stop with you. It can also be used as an effective internal marketing tool for your employees.

Handley says it is important as an employer to add value to your employees by helping them to build strong brands for themselves. “While this can increase the chance that employees will look for better positions, it is a new world of work and people no longer have lifetime careers. Managers need to make peace with this and realise that the people they employ are mobile packages. As an employer you have a responsibility to do justice to your employees’ brand because it will impact on your bottom line.” Employees who feel valued, challenged and developed become more loyal towards the company, portray a better impression to clients and are likely to perform better. •

## Creating your personal brand

1. Identify your competitive edge.
2. Focus on getting your first impressions right. According to Handley there are five factors that can impact on a first impression, these are:
  - Visual. This includes the way you dress and your body language.
  - Verbal. This includes your tone, language abilities and the ability to convey your thoughts clearly.
  - Written. This includes the language and tone that you use in any written messages.
  - Electronic. This is the trail that you leave behind on the internet, including social sites like Facebook and blogs.
  - Word of mouth and introductions. The way in which your reputation, positively or negatively, precedes you. •