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2nd Edition

Personal Branding

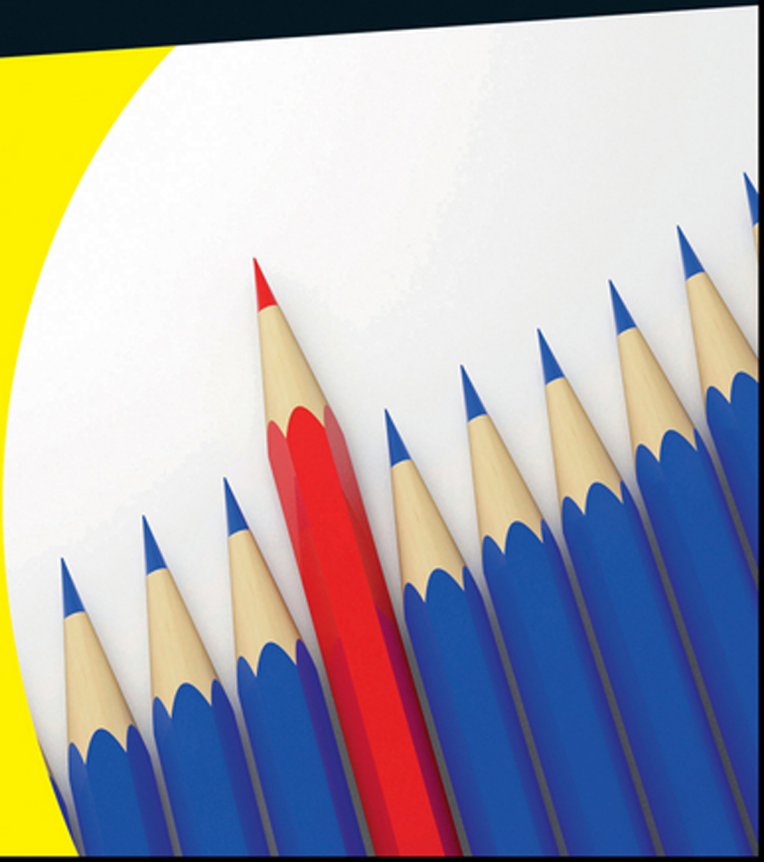
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- Distinguish yourself with an authentic personal brand
- Cultivate your on-brand career by charting a roadmap to success
- Build a strong online identity to showcase your brand
- Evaluate and evolve your personal brand over time

Susan Chritton, M.Ed, PCC

*Master Personal Brand Strategist
Executive Career Coach*



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Personal Branding

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by Susan Chritton M.Ed, PCC

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A Wiley Brand

Personal Branding For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774,
www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2014933737

ISBN 978-1-118-91555-4 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-118-91557-8 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-91556-1 (ebk)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

Imagine that you can step outside your body and observe yourself. Picture yourself walking into a job interview and shaking hands with people you're meeting for the first time. How do you look? Are you smiling confidently and making eye contact or are your eyes darting nervously around the room? Does your handshake seem firm or limp? Is your clothing neatly pressed and closely fitted or is it a bit rumpled and frumpy? Do you look like you're in control of the situation or do you seem overwhelmed?

Now picture yourself walking into your neighborhood grocery store. Are you dressed in a way that shows you pay attention to yourself or have you thrown on stained sweats and an oversized T-shirt? Are you interacting with the store workers or avoiding eye contact? If you run into a neighbor or coworker, do you seem excited to see this person or anxious to get away from her?

One more: Picture yourself at your computer, checking your Facebook page. A friend has sent you an off-color joke. How do you respond? Do you type a raunchy response and send it immediately with the hope of making someone laugh? Or do you opt not to respond in case someone would take offense?

Many people would say that they pull themselves together nicely for a job interview but don't pay much attention to how they look and act at the grocery store or how their social media comments come across. After all, who are you trying to impress in the produce section? And the people who interact with you on Facebook are your *friends*, right? Shouldn't they accept you for who you are — raunchy jokes and all?

But here's the rub: People who are the most successful in this world — in business and otherwise — know that impressions matter in every circumstance. They know the importance of being consistent with their actions, words, and appearances so that every person they interact with carries away a similar impression.

About This Book

This is a how-to book. It's action-oriented. I suppose you could read it without taking any of the steps I encourage, but I'm not sure doing so would prove very helpful! I hope that you interact with the information in this book by taking notes, doing the exercises, and thinking seriously about how you can benefit from each step of the personal branding process. You don't necessarily have to tackle each step in order (I've written each chapter so that it makes sense on its own), but you may find that working this program from start to finish creates the best results.

In this book, I show you how to create a consistent, targeted impression that can help you achieve your personal and professional goals. First, I help you focus on determining who you really are — what you enjoy, what you do well, and what you want from life. Then I walk you through a series of thoughtful steps you can take to bring every aspect of your world into alignment with your true self. The goal of this book is to help you break down self-imposed barriers to success and show the world your best authentic self.

The term *branding* is a marketing phrase. Corporations have been branding themselves for a long time to reach their target audiences and sell more stuff. Corporate branding efforts often involve displaying a company or product name, a tagline, specific colors, a logo, and/or other images in every marketing tool about that company or product. Consistency is key to getting potential buyers to recognize, trust, purchase, and repurchase a product.

Does it seem crass to think in marketing terms when considering your own self and your personal goals? It shouldn't. I don't ask you to think of yourself as a product. Instead, this book is dedicated to helping you figure out who you are as a human being and what sets you apart from every other person on this planet. My hope is that, armed with the information you get in this book, you figure out how to soar in your chosen profession or whatever field of action you pursue. No matter what your goals are, making a consistent, positive impression on people will help you achieve them.

Foolish Assumptions

My biggest assumption about you is that you're going through a change in your life — or hoping to create a change — that may feel somewhat intimidating. Perhaps one of these descriptions comes close to describing your circumstance:

- ✔ You're graduating from college soon and facing the prospect of looking for work in a tight job market. You want to set yourself apart from your peers and have heard that personal branding can help you do so.
- ✔ You're a young professional in your first or second job and feel like you've got greater potential than your coworkers or managers realize. You want to figure out how to show them what you're worth.
- ✔ You're an executive facing a transition — either self-imposed or prompted by changes at your company. You know you've got what it takes to succeed, but you want to focus your remaining work years on activities that are truly meaningful for you. You want to think outside the paycheck with your next move.
- ✔ You're an entrepreneur getting ready to embark on a new venture, and you've heard that branding is key to your success. You don't think of yourself as a corporation, so studying corporate branding techniques doesn't quite make sense. You know that your own interactions with potential customers are crucial to building your business, and you need help to make sure that those interactions generate business.
- ✔ You've been out of the workforce for a while and are uncertain how to start the process of getting back in. Maybe you've been raising children or serving in the military. Maybe you retired early and now realize that you need or want to return to work. You need to determine how to market yourself to employers.

I know I'm biased, but I believe everyone can benefit from the information in this book. Even if your aspirations don't relate to business, knowing yourself, setting goals, and taking steps to achieve them can improve your life.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout the book, I place icons in the margins that call your attention to certain types of text. Here's what each icon means:



This icon points out stories that show you how certain branding ideas have played out for real people in the real world.



This whole book is full of action-oriented, how-to material. But this icon denotes paragraphs that contain especially useful how-to's for developing your brand.



When you see this icon, pay close attention. The point I'm making is something that's worth recalling long after you read the words.



This icon highlights potential missteps that I want to help you avoid.



Throughout this book, you'll find contributions from experts in the field of personal branding. When you see this icon, one of these experts has contributed his expertise.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the abundance of information and guidance on developing and maintaining your personal brand that I provide in this book, you also get access to even more help and information at Dummies.com. Go to www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/personalbranding for a free cheat sheet that accompanies this book.

You can also head to www.dummies.com/extras/personalbranding for some free supplemental articles that you'll find helpful as you begin your journey discovering and perfecting your personal brand.

Where to Go from Here

I wrote this book so that each chapter makes sense no matter where you begin reading, so feel free to check out the table of contents or index and search for a subject of particular interest. For example, if you're mostly concerned about how to improve your online presence, Chapter 10 may be your first stop. If you've already got a job and need ideas for how to promote yourself within your existing position, Chapter 16 can help. If you're curious why everyone in your professional circle is talking about personal branding, start with the chapters in Part I.

Note: If you're committed to developing your personal brand, I consider the chapters in Part II must-reads — especially Chapters 4 and 7. Be sure to spend time with them whenever you're ready to start the branding process in earnest.

Part I

Why Is Personal Branding Important?



Visit www.dummies.com for free content that helps you learn more and do more.

In this part . . .

- ✔ Distinguish yourself by creating your personal brand and recognizing what's at stake if you don't.
- ✔ Grasp the process of building a positive set of experiences using key brand elements.
- ✔ Learn from others who have created memorable personal brands.

Chapter 1

Showing the World Who You Are

In This Chapter

- ▶ Defining the personal branding process
 - ▶ Revealing your true self and your mission
 - ▶ Considering your target market and competition
 - ▶ Sharing your brand in every form of communication
 - ▶ Ensuring that your entire environment is on brand
-

It's a new brand world. You're branded, branded, branded. 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.

—Tom Peters

The greatest success stories inevitably involve people who stand out from the crowd — people who may or may not have extraordinary talents but who most definitely know how to represent their capabilities in everything they do.

This chapter is your preview of how you can distinguish yourself by creating an image and reputation that set you apart, build trust among the people you want to serve, and represent the true, authentic you. This process — the process of creating your own personal brand — can serve you well whether you're searching for a first job, exploring a change in career, looking to be more viable and successful in your current workplace, or hoping to serve your community as a volunteer or leader.

Crafting a personal brand can be exciting and a bit intimidating. To do it right, you have to spend time up front studying yourself and figuring out what really makes you tick. Only with a strong sense of yourself in mind can you undertake the steps that follow, which include identifying your target market, setting yourself apart from your competitors, communicating your brand to the people who need to know you, and aligning every visible aspect

of your life with your brand. In this chapter, I outline the whole process so you know what to expect from the rest of the book. Your own success story is waiting to be written!

Discovering Personal Branding

Personal branding caught fire when *Fast Company* magazine ran a cover article called “The Brand Called You” by Tom Peters in 1997. Soon, books like Daniel H. Pink’s *Free Agent Nation* (Business Plus) and William Bridges’s *Creating You & Co.: Learn to Think Like the CEO of Your Own Career* (Da Capo Press) joined in to support the idea that you direct your own career path. Being self-reliant means that you’re responsible for the direction of your career and the impression that people have of you. The time has come to take control of your personal brand.

So what exactly is *personal branding*? Your personal brand is your reputation, which is defined by your character. Your personal brand is also your legacy; it’s the way others remember you through your actions, your expertise, and the emotional connections that you make. Your personal brand shows your authenticity from the inside out.

You have a personal brand whether you know it or not:

- ✓ “She is so smart.”
- ✓ “He is such a slob.”
- ✓ “I can always count on him to finish what he starts.”



Personal branding is about expressing your authentic self by allowing you to be the person you’re meant to be. But it isn’t just some feel-good, self-help mumbo jumbo: It’s a strategic process that makes you an active partner in creating the direction of your life. Through personal branding, you find out how to bring more value to your work and to the target market that you serve. You discover how to identify and communicate your unique promise of value.

Your personal brand acts as a filter that helps you make decisions that are congruent with who you are and what you stand for. It identifies what makes you unique and clearly communicates your individuality to the people who need to know about you.

Having a personal brand sounds like a great idea, but how do you get one? If you’re serious about developing your personal brand, a very clear road map can get you there. This book guides you through every stop along that map. The following section, in brief, walks you through what you need to do.

Know your brand

Knowing your brand sounds easy enough, but how do you figure out what your brand is?

1. Define who you are.

The beginning of any branding process is being able to clearly define that brand. In personal branding, the product is you! You must take time to get to know yourself and what is important to you. That's what Chapter 4 is all about.

2. Spot your target audience.

Are you interacting with and trying to promote yourself to the right people? In Chapter 5, I help you determine who needs to know about your personal brand.

3. Get to know your competitors.

Whom are you competing with? To have a strong brand, you need to understand who your competitors are and which market niche works for you. Chapter 6 gives you the tools to accomplish this step.

4. Craft a personal brand profile.

This all-important tool, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 7, gathers all the data that you collect about yourself, your target audience, and your competitors into one defining document. This profile helps you pinpoint your unique promise of value and write a statement that succinctly expresses your brand.

Communicate your brand

After you get to know your brand, your next challenge is to communicate it clearly, concisely, and consistently to the people who need to know about it. Here's how:

1. Write your story.

Chapter 8 is a lesson on how to make your story appealing to others. You need to be able to tell others about yourself and to develop a personal commercial (or an *elevator pitch*).

2. Brand your traditional communication tools.

You want to express your personal brand in your letters, resume, professional biography, and presentations — and, if you have the opportunity, on television. Chapter 9 shows you how.

3. Communicate your brand online.

Chapter 10 demonstrates how to merge the world of social media with your personal brand.

4. Create a communications plan.

You need a communications plan so that you're sharing your brand on your own terms — not leaving anything to chance. Chapter 11 gives you the inside scoop on how to craft a communications plan.

Control your brand ecosystem

The phrase *brand ecosystem* may sound intimidating, but it's just shorthand for “every element of your life, from your clothes to your professional colleagues, that influences how your target audience perceives you and whether it wants to learn more about the product or service you're offering.” Phew! You can see why I opted for the shorthand. Here are some of the elements of your ecosystem that you want to control:

- ✔ **Your image:** Whether you like it or not, what you look like on the outside does matter. Fashioning your image to match your personal brand helps you communicate something authentic about yourself at first glance, and Chapter 12 shows you how.
- ✔ **The appearance of your branded materials:** From business cards to your website, you want to create a consistent visual image for your brand that makes the right impression on your target audience. Chapter 13 explains how to select images, colors, and fonts that create the visual effect you want.
- ✔ **Your unique career path:** Your target audience — and the way you interact with it — is determined by where you are in your career. In Chapter 14, I discuss special considerations to keep in mind if you're just out of college, if you're midstream in your career and trying to switch jobs, if you're an executive, if you're an entrepreneur, and more.
- ✔ **Your network:** The people you associate with are very important; they factor into the impression you make on your target audience, as well as your ability to make connections with future employers. Chapter 15 is full of tips for finding people who can support your goals and connecting with them in meaningful ways.
- ✔ **Your performance in your current workplace:** Personal branding is not just for job seekers. If you're already employed, Chapter 16 offers lots of ideas for developing your personal brand in the context of your current workplace.

Figuring Out Who You Really Are

Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You.

—Dr. Seuss

In the previous section, I note that the first step in developing a personal brand is knowing yourself. You need to look at the expectations others have of you and how they influence how you want to be seen. In this process, you ask yourself questions to discover your authenticity and understand what you need in order to live your mission through your personal brand. Here, I help you start thinking about what that process involves.

Shedding others' ideas and expectations

Becoming an authentic human being means that you accept yourself for who you are. Everyone has different approaches to life, likes and dislikes, and skills and talents.

Most likely, when you were in junior high, standing out was deadly. At that age, nothing is more important than fitting in. But fitting in can carry you only so far. At some point, if you truly want to succeed and shine, you have to figure out how to differentiate yourself from the crowd.

I'm not saying that you need to stop caring about what other people think or to stop listening to what your loved ones think is good for you. Instead, in this book I ask you to make an honest assessment of what you want and who you are. You can't build a personal brand based on someone else's ideals. If you did, you'd be a fake.



Taking an honest assessment about who you are and what you want means looking at what you do well and owning it, as well as knowing what you don't do well and recognizing those limitations. You definitely should seek input from others during this process. However, you can't let them determine who you'll be. Personal branding is about you being you in the most authentic way.

Getting to know the authentic you

The 1960s were a time of revolution. Society began to revolt against the conformity of the 1950s. Peace, love, freedom, experimentation, and “do your own thing” became the words of a new generation. I believe the roots of

personal branding were born during this time. Popular culture reflected this feeling in many ways, including a cartoon character named Tooter Turtle. Tooter was never satisfied with his life and was looking to be someone else. Each week he experimented with what it would be like to live another's life by visiting Mr. Wizard, who would cast his spell on Tooter, allowing him to explore living someone else's life.

Tooter Turtle always got himself into trouble trying to be someone he was not. Just when the mess would become too much to handle, Tooter would yell, "Help, Mr. Wizard." Mr. Wizard would say the magic words: "Drizzle, drizzle, drizzle, drome — time for this one to come home." Tooter came home as himself, the only self he could ever really be. Mr. Wizard would say upon Tooter's return that "he is what he is — not what he is not."

The personal branding process helps you own who you are, quirks and all, so that you don't waste your life wishing to be someone else. In this process, you need to take a realistic look at yourself to understand all the factors that make you who you are. You may spend time experimenting with who you are and who you want to be. Getting to know yourself is truly the toughest part of crafting your personal brand. But the end goal — to live and thrive as an authentic human being — is absolutely worth the effort.

Knowing what you need

To determine what matters to you, you first need to identify what you need. A *need* is something that is necessary for you to live a healthy life. Needs can be as basic as food and shelter or as complex as contributing your talents to the world. Needs develop as you grow up and become a central part of your character. To brand yourself, you must know what you need.

Do you stop yourself from trying something new or taking risks for fear of putting your basic needs in jeopardy? Motivation is directly tied to needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which I explain in Chapter 4, states that people are motivated by their unsatisfied needs. When you have an unmet need, you're motivated to do something to change that. Needs direct your feelings and influence your values. Determining what you need helps you understand what you value and where you need to set your goals.

Shaping your identity

Branding guru Robin Fisher Roffer believes that personal branding helps you "to know who you are and be valued for it, to attract what you want, to become more attractive to others, to inspire confidence, to walk your path with integrity, and to distinguish yourself in whatever field you've chosen."



Shaping your identity begins with self-awareness. When you know who you are, you can find purpose in your work. I know you must have a high IQ because you're reading this book, and I'm hoping you also have a high EQ: emotional intelligence quotient. That's because to make the changes necessary to reshape your identity, you must be self-reflective. Self-awareness occurs when you're able to observe yourself as others see you.



The most important ingredient as you embark on the personal branding path is self-acceptance. You need to be able to look closely at yourself, be able to listen to what others think about you, and be willing to grow and change.

Through this process, you'll discover your uniqueness and discover how to leverage it in the marketplace. As you get clarity about your vision, values, passions, purpose, and goals, you'll be able to demonstrate your authenticity knowing that you're coming from a place of strength rather than trying to practice the chameleon life. This clarity helps you live more consistently, which is vital to living a successful life.

Considering your life circumstances

Whether you're fresh out of school or a young professional or reconsidering your mid-career options or preparing for what comes after retirement, you can use your personal brand to help you enjoy each stage of the grand journey that you're experiencing. The beauty of a personal brand is that it isn't static.

Throughout your lifetime, certain things about you (like your sense of humor or your intelligence) will be enduring. But as you gain experience and expertise, your brand will evolve to showcase these new aspects of who you are. Your personal brand grows with you.

Defining your meaning for success

Embarking on the path of personal branding asks you to question what success looks like for you on a personal level. Does success mean what others see in you? Are your achievements the measure of your success? Does how much money you make measure success? How motivated are you by an internal compass? Perhaps you define it by the freedom you have to make your own choices or to choose your own path.

I do know that owning your success (whatever that means to you) is key to achieving more success. Working through the personal branding process helps you examine these questions. You may not know what success means to you as you begin this journey, but chances are you'll have a much clearer idea after you work through the process.

Heeding your call

If figuring out who you really are seems a bit scary, I'd like to reassure you that it doesn't have to be difficult. You already have an inner voice that can guide you toward your true identity. It's the voice that tells you "Yes, go for it" or "Stop, this is a big mistake." I believe you know your own best answers if you pause to listen to that wise inner voice.



It is freeing to let your guard down and open up to the authentic you, the one where your true strengths, talent, and personality lie. As you work your way through the personal branding process, you want to pay extra attention to your inner voice so that you can know your calling, determine where your life's mission and your abilities intersect, and move forward in a purposeful way.

Living your "why"



Dr. Sarah David, Founder and Chief Empowerment Officer of NICE: The National Institute for Career Empowerment, offers seven strategies that she uses in her coaching programs to help others gain clarity in discovering their "why" — their purpose or mission. These steps can help you identify your strengths and translate your unique gifts into a dream career and personal brand that is fulfilling. Here are Dr. David's strategies, in her words:

- ✓ **Find your cheerleaders and identify your tribe.** Finding the support you need to excel helps you live your "why". I highly recommend joining a support group of like-minded people. A coach can also serve as one of your biggest cheerleaders. Identify whom you'll follow and whom you'll lead.
- ✓ **Follow your heart.** In counseling and coaching others, I've found that many people have delayed their dreams. They put them on a shelf. They have other careers that may not be fulfilling but pursue them because they are more popular, they pay more, or someone else thinks they're a good idea. There is nothing wrong with doing what is practical, but I've found that people always circle back around to their original dreams somewhere down the path. Find a way to incorporate what you love into your career.
- ✓ **Identify your mission in life.** Whether your mission is to start your own business, work for someone else, or volunteer for a worthy cause, the work around identification is very important to the process. Whether you've known your mission since you were a child or you're still trying to discover it, do the self-reflection needed to understand your mission in life.
- ✓ **Identify your strengths, values, passions, and goals.** Understand how these foundation steps are critical to identifying your business or career of choice. First, identify what you do well. There are several ways you can identify your calling. Some people already know what their calling is because it was a seed that was planted early in life. It may be the one thing that you knew you wanted to be or do when you grew up. For others, your calling may be something that you've been mentored to do your entire life, such as run a family business or continue with a craft.