

PERSONAL BRANDS

MANAGE YOUR LIFE WITH TALENT
AND TURN IT INTO A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE



Roberto Álvarez del Blanco

Foreword by David A. Aaker

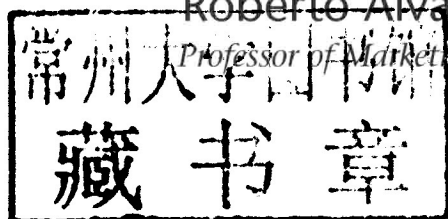


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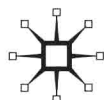
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turn it into a unique experience

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FOREWORD

Cervantes said in *Don Quixote* – ‘A good name is better than riches.’ The implication is that the most important asset a person has is his or her name. A good reputation will help create relationships, satisfaction and happiness. A tarnished name will generate stress, difficulties and unhappiness. Further it is hard to change an unfavorable reputation. Others have a hard time being convinced there is a change and have little motivation to obtain and process supporting information.

Every person has a brand, resented by a name and face that has a host of associated characteristics such as personality, interests, activities, friends, family, personal appearance, assets, skills and profession. The brand will affect how a person is perceived and thus influence all his or her relationships. Whether a person is liked and respected will largely be based on the brand. People like to spend time and associate with people with ‘good’ brands.

This brand is an accumulation of everything that person has done, is doing and will do. Any activity, incident, appearance or interaction will affect the brand. So whether, the person knows it or not, he or she is evolving the brand over time. The question is whether the brand is actively managed or allowed to drift and whether there is discipline and consistency over time. The answer should be that there is a huge payoff to employing active management and exercising some discipline over what will affect the brand.

The brand structure is not simple. Most people will have a variety of brands or brand variants corresponding to their different relationships. Each will potentially involve a separate brand or a variant of the master brand and one challenge will be to make them co-exist and to avoid inconsistencies. In particular, a person may need a professional brand and a personal brand.

The professional brand will represent the face toward the professional colleagues. What expectations will they have about the work performance? What are the perceptions of talent which can be employed to tasks and programs? How is it to work with the person behind the brand?

The personal brand will affect relationship with friends and family. What are the interests and personality which affect decisions to spend time with the person? And is a different brand required for children, friends and spouses? For children the firm, parent side might be emphasized. For friends, the humorous, fun side might be dialed up. For a spouse, the romantic side might be more prominent.

One challenge is how to reconcile these different brands. There should be some characteristics which are core to the person and common across all brands. Some of these common characteristics might be emphasized in one context more than in another. And for some contexts such as being a parent, additional characteristics might be added which do not appear elsewhere. However, while the different brands are managed, care must be taken to insure that inconsistencies do not emerge because inconsistencies are often resolved to the detriment of the brand.

The concept of a 'person brand' may be foreign to most people who think of brands as something relevant to packaged goods' companies. But think of politicians who assume that they need to actively manage their brand because they know it will affect their relationship with both voters and colleagues who are essential to success. Thus, it is natural for a politician to monitor his or her image and to design action and communication programs to influence that image. While most people are not as visible as a politician, their brand is every bit as important in their world.

How do you go about managing your brand? There are two parts. The first is strategic: what do you want your brand to stand for? And how should the brand be adjusted for different audiences? The second is implementation: what can and should be done in order to communicate the brand?

Developing a brand strategy starts with analyses involving several components. First, what is the current image? What do people now think of you in terms of such characteristics as personality, skills, activities, possessions and people you associate with? What are their expectations of you in terms of talent and motivations? Second, what are your assets such as your education, personality elements and appearance? What are you good at? What are you interested in improving? Third, what are the programs which you are planning or considering? Any plans to develop building of new skills, adding new activities or dialing up of existing ones? Fourth, what image would you like to portray? How is it different from your existing one? How aspirational is it? Is it simply emphasizing some aspect of your brand which already has credibility or does it represent changing the person and ultimately the image? It should be recognized that the latter would be more difficult.

Several alternative brand dimensions should be on the table. Usually, there are alternative ways to group and prioritize them. The end goal

is to develop an aspirational image that will resonate with the target audiences, will be credible or capably of becoming credible, and will reflect the persons aspirations.

With a brand strategy in place the next step is to bring that vision to life, to create programs and patterns of behavior which will reinforce it. One way to get options is to consider role models. Who inside and outside your social circle has been successful at achieving this brand vision or at least has been successful with respect to a dimension of the brand vision? How did that person get there? Is there something which can be learned from the role model? Examining the behavior of successful people almost always stimulates actionable programmes that can be adapted.

Managing our own brand will take uncomfortable introspection and discipline in terms of emphasizing 'on-brand' thoughts and actions and avoiding being seen as 'off brand'. It is difficult but very worthwhile.

My longtime friend, Roberto Álvarez del Blanco is the ideal person to write this book. He has been skilled at managing his own brand and thus is a good role model. More relevant, he is one of the leading brand strategists and theorists in Europe, indeed in the world. This book should be a worthwhile addition to any library and will give a boost to the personal and professional life for anyone who follows its teaching.

Orinda, California

DAVID A. AAKER



INTRODUCTION

In today's world of deep and complex transformation, people increasingly need to reflect on life, hope, relationships, involvement and good personal management. Striving for success amid the demanding nature of our difficult times requires great care in developing adequate structures for our individual personalities. We need to look upon ourselves as if we were looking at a personal brand.

Brands live and develop in much the same ways in organizations as within people. Similar ethical, cultural and social elements coincide. The crucial difference is that the concept of the personal brand refers to the interaction between groups of individuals and the relationships they establish between each other.

If and when it is well managed, the personal brand provides clear evidence of individual assets and strengths: the experience, achievements and abilities which can highlight genuine talent. The tone of each personal brand illuminates the underlying values and allows each person fully to exhibit their own individual characteristics. Each personal brand draws attention to those human strengths exchanged across relationships which, in time, are embedded and become the foundation stones of personal identity.

This book offers a series of original reflections arising from brand analysis and brand management experience in the commercial world. It is the result of a long process of research and practical experience, begun as far back as the early 1990s in the prestigious Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley. The Haas School of Business has generated much of the most important research and theory in the area of strategic management in contemporary marketing and many of the discoveries unveiled are also appropriate to be used on a micro (or personal) level.

Just as with well-known commercial brands, the personal brand can become a means of affirming true identity, of highlighting ability and of establishing reputation. Simultaneously, each individual must design strategies and focus on how to organize and manage the personal brand in order to best achieve the desired results and to continue the ongoing work of building upon individual reality.

Successful, stand-out people are those who have built up their personal brand and managed to make it count at work, in their relationships and in society at large. Successful people use their personal brand within their family life, among their friends, in their professional field, in their spiritual lives and among various groups of influence. Successful people achieve those great objectives in life: the search for individual triumph, happiness and transcendence.

This book is aimed at anyone (regardless of age, gender or occupation) looking for change in their personal or professional lives and those who seek psychological and economic success in the future. Being ready to face up to the challenge of personal renewal does not in any way reduce the difficulty or uncertainty of such a journey. However, it does increase the probability of beginning this important journey well prepared and well focused.

Your personal brand will help you define your aims and values. It will identify your creative potential and your leadership qualities. It will highlight those areas in which you excel as a result of your knowledge and experience. This is the ideal place from which your personal brand can naturally emerge. Self-motivation, allied with imagination, courage and optimism will allow you improve your capacity and will show you that the road toward achievement is clear and well lit. By taking part in the process of building your own personal brand, you will overcome your own personal circumstances as you build your own future.

The chapters in this book provide detailed conceptual analysis as well as useful tools and methods to help you begin a strategic personal conversation. This dialogue sets up the parameters for a process of organization and continued learning toward the goal of identifying key elements and priorities in designing your own personal brand.

Personal brands come in various patterns. In order to achieve your goals and to fully enjoy success and happiness, you will need to fully understand the internal logic behind the development of the personal brand. You must become an expert in the discovery, definition, application, practice and refinement of the necessary life skills and energy required. You will need to learn and master the language and sources of your own untapped potential. Once you achieve the desired result, your world will change and flourish.

This is a wonderful and fascinating challenge. Reaching into your reserves of experience to develop your own outstanding personal brand is one of the most stimulating investments you will ever make on a personal level.

Enable yourself, enrich yourself, be yourself.

It is a privilege to share this certainty with you.

ROBERTO ÁLVAREZ DEL BLANCO
Professor of Marketing
IE Business School



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Few projects are possible without the help of other people and this book is no exception. Inspiration comes from diverse sources including my family, friends, colleagues, MBA students and postgraduate programs from different countries over a long period of time. There are no words to thank everyone; however there are some to whom I am indebted. Especially, David Aaker, professor emeritus of the University of California, Berkeley who has worldwide recognition as the 'father of the brand movement' and who has written the foreword for this book. I have had the privilege of working with him academically and personally for a long period of time. This has enabled me to share his rigorous thought and the pleasure of significantly expanding my knowledge.

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1

BRAND YOURSELF, OR BE BRANDED: IMAGINING LIFE, IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The importance in building and managing a brand in order to achieve commercial and organizational success has been well established and developed over recent years. A brand reflects the organizational relationships between a company and its clients and includes aspects concerning identity, *raison d'être*, relationships and experience. Branding is now seen as one of the most valuable intangible assets in economic terms.

Branding has become such a powerful means of promoting products and services that it makes sense to consider people in a similar way, thus creating a solid and positive emphasis on the personality and activities or services undertaken in competitive terms. Such a focus can help towards success in professional career development as well as in terms of aspirations.

If we are to achieve individual success in today's increasingly dynamic and complex world, it is necessary to carefully approach the construction of one's own personal brand and how this brand is presented to the outside world.

An outsider is unable to see into our own interior world. Recognition, value systems, beliefs and abilities are the key indicators of our reputation and external image. A positive brand image creates a desire in the consumer to buy and use products and services from within the business and advertising world. Your professional career and personal journey operates in similar ways and can be measured in terms of job success, promotion, recommendations, prestige and progress.

Many successful people have come to see themselves as personal brands and have interpreted their role using the basic principles and foundations of intangible brand value.

Contemporary society is now coming to terms with the transition towards the information and knowledge era. We all face new challenges in our personal, family and organizational lives. These

challenges vary greatly from person to person and each individual faces a set of uniquely personal circumstances.

If we really want to realize our dreams and if we are prepared to courageously face up to our greatest challenges, life shows us that we need to understand and apply the principles and natural laws governing success in our endeavors. How we apply those principles depends on our own particular skills, talent and personal creativity. However, the final result in any such project will always be based on the principles of success.

Personal branding plays a major role as a catalyst for attitude change, while in some cases it will provide a solid basis for continued improvement. Your personal brand is a psychological framework for ideas and a highly effective vehicle of complex significance. Your personal brand has a major part to play in achieving human harmony and improving your personal life proposal. Your personal brand is not just a simple mechanism for imagined self-promotion. It represents real and powerful potential energy towards understanding and managing individual talent.

There has been much rigorous scientific research undertaken in recent years which allows us cross-reference and adapt findings, ideas and mechanisms on an individual or personal level. Systems that work well and successfully for a company will undoubtedly produce similar results when applied on an individual basis. Personal branding involves character, charisma and spirituality and successfully avoids jaded, automatic, programmed responses. Since personal branding derives from a search for human meaning, it falls to the individual to provide the impulse behind the search.

This chapter will analyze the concepts and basic principles of brand value through the optic of identity and relationships. Subsequent chapters will delve more deeply into those specific aspects of personal branding which provide sources of inspiration for talent management, relationships and life, perhaps not as we have known it before.

INTRODUCING BRAND VALUE

Before the 1980s, when pioneering and important research on branding began to emerge from the marketing field, brand analysis was only ever given serious consideration by corporate lawyers working on issues of intellectual property and brand ownership. However, it is clear that brands and branding have played an important role in marketing for over a century, particularly since mass production and improved transport systems made it possible to efficiently produce products in one location and distribute to other more distant locations.

Even in the pre-industrial age, we have evidence that branding was used to develop strong and lasting client relationships. The inhabitants

of a town or city knew where to find the best pastries and where to get the friendliest service. Proprietors made great efforts to make their clients feel so special that they would travel significant distances to consume particular products and enjoy the benefits of excellent service, all the while being prepared to pay that little extra for that brand association.

We now realize that branding is a highly valuable form of capital. Building and sustaining a brand is sophisticated business. As a composite of science and art, a brand is an intangible asset and its creation is a unique compound of visceral, emotional, personal and cultural elements. Branding extends far beyond the functionality of a product and can be seen in terms of style, feelings and personality.

The greatest challenge for any brand is to create a clear and distinctive identity in the mind of the client as well as to fully distinguish itself from competitor products and services, thus providing competitive advantage and a valuable strategic asset.

The benefits of good brand management can be seen in many ways since it can help in the process of:

- *Achieving the highest price-point:* Why do we pay more to see a renowned doctor while another doctor is much cheaper?
- *Adding value and recognition:* Only 10% of personal valuation is derived from tangible elements (eg. specific skills). Personal branding strength (eg. relationships) provides the other 90%
- *Developing lines of activity:* Personal branding involves us in mutual admiration networks which in turn provide new and greater development opportunities.
- *Overcoming periodic economic downturns:* A good personal brand will survive times of economic crisis and will successfully come through turbulence
- *Attracting high-profile people and associates:* Would you rather work with or be associated with an unknown quantity or with a recognized personal brand? Most people would prefer to work with high-end personal brands. Prestige is reflected by association.

Brand management extends far beyond consumer products, industrial goods, luxury items or services. In today's world, brand is everything. London is the most interesting, cosmopolitan, ideas-driven city in the world; Silicon Valley is the most advanced area in information technology development in the world; Greenpeace is the most dynamic NGO; *The Lord of the Rings* has a brand community of over 200 million people throughout the world; Richard Branson, founder and chairman of the Virgin Group, is an iconoclastic entrepreneur; U2, led by charismatic singer Bono, has become a musical and ideological phenomenon; Joanne Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* series, has become an icon for children worldwide; David Beckham, aside from his football