



Be Your Own Brand

A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out from the Crowd

by David McNally and Karl D. Speak
Berrett-Koehler © 2002
150 pages

Focus

Leadership & Mgt.
Strategy
Sales & Marketing
Corporate Finance
Human Resources
Technology & Production
Small Business
Economics & Politics
Industries & Regions
► **Career Development**
Personal Finance
Concepts & Trends

Take-Aways

- Your brand is how other people see you.
- Everyone has a personal brand.
- You can manage your brand to affect people's perceptions in the same way that business uses brands to shape customer expectations.
- Your brand is your personal combination of abilities, style and conduct.
- To build your own brand, first look inside yourself and know yourself.
- Just like a commercial label, your brand should connect on an emotional level.
- Manage every aspect of your personal brand, including competencies, standards and style.
- Analyze your brand to understand how you are perceived and what you can do about it.
- Be sure your brand delivers on its promises.
- Be a good brand as well as a strong brand.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
6	6	7	6

To purchase individual Abstracts, personal subscriptions or corporate solutions, visit our Web site at www.getAbstract.com or call us at our U.S. office (954-359-4070) or Switzerland office (+41-41-367-5151). getAbstract is an Internet-based knowledge rating service and publisher of book Abstracts. getAbstract maintains complete editorial responsibility for all parts of this Abstract. The respective copyrights of authors and publishers are acknowledged. All rights reserved. No part of this abstract may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior written permission of getAbstract Ltd (Switzerland).

Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this Abstract, you will learn: 1) How to think of yourself and present yourself as if you are a branded corporate product; and 2) How to manage your personal brand accordingly.

Recommendation

This thin book elaborates on the interesting premise that you can achieve deeper, truer personal relationships by managing your life as if it was a marketing campaign and you were a brand. The idea is shocking on the face of it, since the general stereotype of marketing, advertising and branding is not a parallel for deep truth and conviction. On the contrary. It is hard to think of yourself as a marketing object, akin to a bottle of beer or a box of laundry detergent, even if you are clearly out in the world selling yourself. But the initial shock creates enough interest to compel the reader to keep reading. This lightweight, somewhat meandering book offers one fresh idea: you can assess and adjust your impact on others by seeing yourself as a quantifiable branded entity. Otherwise, it ultimately offers little that is particularly new or deep, but — and this is a worthy caveat — *getAbstract.com* finds that it does provide an amusing, intriguing new perspective on some fundamental and enduring truths about behavior and self-awareness. And, if it proves to be just one more mechanism for understanding and presenting yourself, careers have depended on less.

Abstract

The Meaning of Brand

A brand isn't a product or service. It's an emotion, a perception, a memory, an experience. Everybody has, whether they know it or not, a personal brand. You mean something to everybody in your life, and that meaning is your brand. Your brand is what the people around you perceive you to be. Maybe you think people don't "get" you. If so, then there may be a gap between what you think you are and what other people think you are. Closing that gap is an important part of your personal brand management campaign.

Businesses use brand management techniques to build firm, lasting relationships with their customers. You can do the same thing. You can use principles drawn from business to manage your personal brand. Your relationships are the most important part of your life — and your brand is all about relationships.

Images

Think of the people you know. Close your eyes and say their names. What comes to mind? Their brand! Your perception of each person is that individual's brand. Whether your perceptions are negative or positive, you've unconsciously branded each person. That impression exists in your mind. Your brand exists the same way in the minds of others.

Quality

Now, just try thinking of the word "brand" itself. Probably some individual product brands will come into your head. Pay attention to what you are thinking. You probably don't think of anything specific about the product or service the brand represents. Instead, you are more likely to think of the product in terms of a quality its brand

"Everybody already has a brand."

"Many of the proven, successful, loyalty-building ideas and tactics used by businesses in managing their brands can be brought to bear on your own personal relationships, with outstanding results."

“Your values affect not only what you think and feel but also how you behave.”

“First, perception is reality.”

“A brand relationship is like a bank account.”

conveys, such as affection, trust, respect and so on. Brand research has repeatedly demonstrated that what people remember about a brand is its quality.

Brands are like relationships that way. Your relationships are all about the very same factors — trust, affection and respect. When you think of relationships, you think of or feel these emotions and reactions.

Positive Thinking

Endeavor to build a personal brand that people will associate with positive emotions or qualities. Brands are valuable and what makes them valuable are the emotions they elicit — provided the emotions are positive. Brands evoke positive emotions that impel people to buy. But the flip side is also true: negative emotions devalue brands and repel buyers instead of attracting them.

What determines or creates your brand is not what you have in mind, but what others have in mind. People decide, on the basis of your behavior, what values to associate with you. Once they have made this decision, they will assume it’s correct. In other words:

- If people have a positive impression of you, and you slip up once, they’ll assume it was an anomaly and disregard it. Mistakes won’t damage your brand appreciably unless they happen often enough to make people change their expectations.
- If you have a positive brand and you deliver more than people expect, your brand will become even stronger and more positive.

Brand Attributes

In this personal realm, as in the commercial world, strong brands are:

- Relevant — When is a brand relevant? It is relevant when (and only to the extent that) the values it represents matter.
- Distinctive — Belief and commitment make a brand distinctive. When you believe in something and make a commitment to action on the basis of what you believe, you will create a strong, distinctive brand.
- Consistent — Consistency means delivering the same experience every time. This confirms expectations and makes people feel justified in trusting your brand.

Businesses use the concept of a “brand ladder” to describe the progression of a brand through several stages of value. On the lower rungs of the ladder, the customer doesn’t expect much. Deliver the minimum performance expected, and the customer will have a positive but not terribly strong impression. As interaction increases, the customer comes to expect more and more, to depend upon higher and higher qualities of performance. As the brand delivers, step by step, it climbs the brand ladder.

Use the same concept to analyze and understand your personal relationships. Remember that each and every interaction you have with each and every person you meet offers a chance to climb the brand ladder.

Remember that a strong brand is not always a good brand. When you have a strong brand, people know what you stand for. But people knew what John Gotti stood for. He had a strong brand — but not a good, positive or moral brand. When you have a strong brand, you stand out from the crowd. People have proportionately strong expectations. What you are matters to them — for good or ill.

“To develop a strong personal brand, start by identifying the nature of the key relationships you plan to have.”

“Life is never more rich, more full or more rewarding than when you are moving faithfully and persistently toward a compelling vision.”

“Relationships aren’t created equal.”

Brand Dimension

As you build your personal brand, you will become aware that in branding, there is no such thing as perception being different from or at odds with reality. Perception and reality are the same thing in brand space. Your brand really is what other people think it is. You might say, “I’m not really like that.” But your brand does not depend on what you perceive. It depends on what others perceive about you, however, you can analyze their perceptions and affect them over time.

Just as physical objects have dimensions, so do brands. The three dimensions of brand are:

- Competency — What you must be able to do to meet minimum expectations and to show capability.
- Standard — How you deliver, what level of quality you accept and sustain over time and across various endeavors.
- Style — Your personal touch.

Analyze your personal brand based on these three dimensions. Start with your competencies. List the kinds of relationships you have with people and what you are good at doing. You may be a mother or father, a sister or brother, a wife or husband, a friend, a writer. Jot these relationships and abilities down under a column headed “Competencies.”

In another column, list your standards. Are you a loner or sociable, reliably honest or opportunistic, disciplined or undisciplined, and so on? Finally, make a list of your style characteristics. Are you creative or analytical, passive or aggressive, firm or flexible, humble or arrogant, retiring or outgoing?

Taken together these columns create a picture of your brand.

Authenticity

Values matter and a brand must reflect or project values. Authenticity is one of the most important values because it builds trust. A brand that is not authentic leaves people saying, “There’s something about this I just don’t trust.”

Authenticity is a function of:

- Purpose — Purpose refers to the ultimate meaning or hope that guides and shapes your life. Are you trying to make money at any cost, to live for the day or to be a saint? Your purpose will color your relationships with others. If your purpose is merely to make as much money as you can, and manipulate others to achieve that purpose, your brand will connote manipulative falsity.
- Vision — Vision is your view of what the future can or ought to hold. Many people stop exercising this inner vision when they are adolescents. As a result, they plod along a path they first glimpsed as teenagers. Instead, it is good idea to revisit and review your vision and expectations.
- Value — Values, in this sense, refer to those things you deeply and firmly believe. If you don’t deeply and firmly believe anything, your brand cannot be authentic.

A personal brand values profile provides a checklist you can use to test and identify your deepest, brand-building values.

Management

You have a personal brand, whether you realize it or not. You know that other people have an impression of you, but you may not realize that their impression is your brand.

“Inconsistency is the devil of a strong brand.”

“Everyday life presents people with constant opportunities to refine their brands in the crucible of simple acts.”

Since your personal brand affects every relationship, it’s a good idea to take your brand in hand and manage it. Among the management techniques you should use are:

- Brand statement — Write down what you want your brand to be.
- Metrics — Measure how well your brand meets the objectives you’ve set.
- Brand building techniques — Put your brand in order when things go wrong.

Each stage of brand management requires a careful examination of every aspect of your relationships with other people. Examine yourself daily to see whether what you have done reflects or mars your brand. Did you fail to return a phone call? Get angry? Treat someone with disrespect? How many times? Is it your brand objective to be such a person? Repair the damage immediately, and you will sustain a strong, positive brand.

Conclusion: Living the Brand

All you really need to remember about personal brand building is:

- Write your personal brand statement; revisit and refine it over time.
- Respect your brand and obey it.
- Measure what you do against what your brand says you ought to do.
- Be true to your brand.
- Check how other people react to you to see whether your brand is relevant to them.
- Be consistent.
- Police yourself against a personal truth-in-labeling law.
- Carefully construct your brand environment by choosing your friends.
- Make sure your employer supports your brand — if not, change employers.
- Consider relationships as assets.

About The Authors

David McNally is a writer, speaker and moviemaker who has sold movies and training programs to Alcoa, American Express, Pfizer and many other big companies. His other books include *Even Eagles Need a Push: Learning to Soar in a Changing World* and *The Eagle’s Secret: Success Strategies for Thriving at Work and in Life*. Karl D. Speak is president of Beyond Marketing Thought, a brand-consulting firm. He also writes for various trade magazines. His clients include Target, *The Wall Street Journal*, Stanley Tool Works and other major companies.

Buzz-Words

Authenticity / Brand analysis / Brand attributes / Brand dimension / Brand ladder / Brand statement