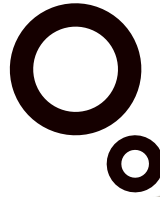


IT'S NOT JUST
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PERSONAL BRANDING
FOR BRITS



Jennifer Holloway

How to promote yourself,
raise your profile and get ahead...
without sounding like an idiot



WHY READ THIS BOOK?

Journalists. They can be a harsh bunch – hard to win over and with a string of other contacts to call if you don't manage it. I should know: I spent 15 years of my career dealing with the media and their varying requests, from my early days as a naïve press officer to the latter ones as a seasoned PR executive.

If ever there was a job where you needed people's buy-in to be successful, that was it. It didn't matter how good your story was – if a journalist didn't rate you, your chance of it appearing in the media was slim to none. Instead, you had to build relationships and stay on people's radars if you were to have any chance of standing out from the press-office crowd. It didn't take me long to realise the only real differentiator I had was me...so I used it: every time I picked up the phone, every time I sent an email, every time I met someone in person. I made sure I connected on a personal level before I even considered talking business.

It worked and I got my stories (and me) on the front page of the national papers as well as on TV and radio – including *The Today Programme*, *BBC Breakfast* and *Sky News*.

But it's not just journalists who need winning over. No matter what your job and whatever your sector, the more people buy into you, the easier it becomes to find a job, bag a promotion, start a business, land a new client or just be happier at work.

As for me, whilst I had a knack for seeming comfortable in my own skin, making people believe I was uber-confident, in reality it was little more than a veneer of self-assurance. My wafer-thin armour would deflect doubt for weeks, sometimes months, then crack with the smallest of prods: a throwaway remark from a boss, a piece of well-meant feedback from a colleague, a mickey-take from a friend.

3 - WHY READ THIS BOOK?

People didn't see it, but I'd go home and blub my eyes out. Then I'd pull myself together, patch up the armour and head back out again.

After 15 years of doing PR though, something altered and I fell out of love with my job. As part of figuring out what had happened I had some executive coaching and, as people often do, decided I'd like to be an executive coach too. I got my qualification, set up shop and started the long, challenging task of gaining and retaining clients. Every piece of work I pitched for was like a job interview: I had limited time to go in, sell who I am, explain what I do and hope they liked what they saw. More intimidating was the fact I went from working for a business to being my own business, so getting buy-in to me was more essential than ever.

Just as it had in my PR days, my strategy of selling me before I sold what I was selling continued to work and my business grew. However, not long in I realised I didn't want to be a little fish in a huge pond of thousands of coaches. I wanted my own puddle where I could do things my way and mark myself out as different. Looking at the issues I was helping clients with, I realised most led back to the fact the person lacked confidence. They didn't know who they were, so they didn't know who to be or what to do. In other words, they didn't know their personal brand. Bingo!

I reworked my whole proposition and started again, specialising in personal branding for business. Only this time I was selling something that, at the time, few people knew about and even fewer wanted to buy – a pretty tough challenge.

To begin, I set to work defining my own personal brand in a way I never had before, really thinking it through and focusing on all the great stuff I bring to the table. And an amazing thing happened...

My veneer of self-assurance grew thicker. I started spending a lot more time in the Land of Self-Confidence, a wonderful place

where everything's rocking and rolling: you love what you do, other people love what you do and success is your best friend.

It's not my permanent residence though. I still take trips to the Land of Self-Doubt where nobody rates you and it's a dead cert you're going to fail. Indeed, you might know the place. But because I've got a road map for the Land of Self-Confidence (my personal brand), I find it easier and quicker to get myself back there.

That's why I wrote this book – to give people a steer on how to create their own personal brand and, just as importantly, get it out there so they can spend more time in the Land of Self-Confidence too.

Or to put it another way, I want people to be successful just by being themselves.

I'll be straight with you: none of what you'll read in this book is rocket science. It's simply common-sense stuff that tends to get forgotten as we go about our busy lives. So let's get on with refreshing your memory...

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INTRODUCTION

If you're a Brit reading this book – or from any other country where modesty is the order of the day – congratulations! You've already overcome the biggest cultural hang-up to your personal brand: that it's 'not the done thing' to have one, let alone tell anyone else you have one. After all, arrogance is not an attractive quality.

So here's the good news: the book you have in your hands is written by a Brit (me) for Brits (you) to avoid the arrogance entirely and provide a guide to subtly blowing your own trumpet without sounding like an idiot.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book isn't just any old guide to personal branding, it's a practical guide. So alongside the 'thinking bits' about what personal branding is and how it works sits a shedload of tools and techniques to apply that thinking in the real world.

The book comprises two parts: the first focuses on **Creating Your Personal Brand** by defining it (if you don't know what you're selling, how can people buy it?) then checking how it's perceived by others (is what you're selling what people are buying?).

The second part moves on to **Promoting Your Personal Brand** (because there's no point keeping a good thing to yourself) in three key places: in the office, out and about and online.

The first part – **Creating Your Personal Brand** – requires a bit of time and a lot of thinking, but if you're serious about your career or business I'd recommend starting there. However, if you already have a pretty good idea of what your brand is, you could always skip straight to the second part – **Promoting Your Personal Brand**.

Whichever chapter you're reading, I've included lots of real-life examples to show you what I'm talking about, although some names have been changed to respect confidentiality. There's a round-up of Dos and Don'ts at the end of numerous chapters as a reminder. Plus you can always do what I do and write extra notes in the margin as you go along.

THE PRIMARY RULE

By reading this book you've become part of the growing band of people who realise that hiding your light under a bushel is no longer the canniest thing to do: people who want to move their career to the next stage; people who realise they can't do their job until they've got buy-in from their team; people who understand their personal brand is their company brand; people who are leaders of tomorrow establishing their credentials today.

Whatever reason you have for wanting to work on your personal brand, they're all underpinned by one primary rule:

People buy people.

I don't mean literally (that would be illegal). What I mean is, when you're considering 'buying' someone, the first thing you decide is if you like them. Then over time you decide if you respect them and, with more time still, if you trust them – which is the ultimate buy-in.

For example, think about a time you went into a shop fully expecting to buy an item, but there was something about the salesperson you didn't like, so you left empty-handed. Or a time when you weren't expecting to buy anything but there was something about the salesperson you liked, so you walked out with a receipt in your hand and a bag on your arm.

That's people buying people in action, but it's not reserved for salespeople – we all need others to buy into us.

Here's what I'm talking about...

Let's pretend you work in an office (indeed, maybe you do) and 5pm has rolled around. You've got an urgent job to finish and need help, so you approach a colleague who's packed up for the day and is in the process of putting their coat on. When you tell them what you need, do they slide their coat off, put it back on the hook and say, "Let's get started"? (A sure sign they've 'bought' you.) Or do they hurriedly button up their coat, avert their eyes and walk away with some vague mumble about it being parents' evening – even though you know they don't have kids. (A sign they probably haven't 'bought' you.)

The bottom line is, the more people buy into you, the easier your life becomes. However, there's something else to add to that phrase you may not have realised before:

**People buy people
and it's your personal brand that tells them
what they get when they buy you.**

When you consider how many people you've come into contact with over the course of your career or business, and how their buy-in (or lack of it) has affected your success, you start to realise the importance of a personal brand. Plus when you consider how many more people you'll come into contact with, and how their buy-in will affect your future success, you start to realise why working on your brand with the help of this book is a marvellous idea!

THE PAYBACK

In case that's not enough to convince you of the value of spending time on your personal brand, here are 10 other benefits:

1. Defining your personal brand gives you the confidence to be yourself.

2. Being you is a lot easier than trying to be someone else.
3. By focusing on what's great you add clarity to your brand.
4. You can pinpoint the thing that really makes you stand out from the crowd.
5. Promoting your personal brand helps you sell your benefits.
6. By selling your benefits people know what they're buying.
7. Doing this consistently helps people trust what they're buying.
8. People like to put things into neat little boxes in their mind, so you give them the box to put you in.
9. By having you in a neat box, it's easier for people to sell you and your benefits to others.
10. If you don't do it, you'll get left behind. Need I say more?

FINAL OBJECTIONS

If you're still thinking, "What the chuff do I need a personal brand for?", here are a few of the objections I've heard over the years, along with my response:

"It's not relevant to me."

If you have a job and think the only reason you'd promote your personal brand is to get another job, think again. Promoting your brand is what you need to do to ensure you keep the job you already have.

The same applies if you're the boss of your own business; you might think you can't be fired, but your clients can certainly find someone else to deliver what you deliver.

"I'd be embarrassed to blow my own trumpet."

My advice: get over it. Modesty is indeed a virtue, but you can take it too far and while you're busy being a shrinking violet, your colleagues and competitors are getting promotions and winning contracts that should have been yours.

“My work should speak for itself.”

The days when hard work and determination would get you to the top are over. They are no more. They have ceased to be. This attitude is as useful as a dead parrot because everyone's so busy running to keep up they don't have time to pay attention to what you're doing.

Here's what I'm talking about...

After 15 years with the company, my client had recently been promoted to the board, along with a colleague who'd been there only three years. He told me how unfair this was as, “Gary only got the job because he's good at blowing his own trumpet, but I think your work should speak for itself.” My response was, “Really...how's that been working for you? Gary got to where you wanted to get to a lot quicker – so maybe he's doing something right.” There's a balance between all style and all substance but the fact he'd taken five times longer to become a director suggested he'd got that balance wrong.

“I don't want people knowing everything about me.”

Nor do they want to know. You decide which bits are worth shouting about and stick to those. And if you don't want people knowing you spend your spare time re-enacting the Battle of Hastings or building scale models of Big Ben out of matchsticks... don't tell them.

“I can't be bothered with all that.”

Ever heard the phrase “You snooze, you lose”? Enough said.

BACK TO BASICS

I've already mentioned this book offers a practical guide to creating and promoting your personal brand, but before we knuckle down to the hard work, a little bit of background might hit the spot. Having learnt never to 'ass' 'u' 'me' people know what I'm talking about (especially my other half), let's start here:

WHAT IS A PERSONAL BRAND?

As I said on page 13: people buy people and it's your personal brand that tells them what they get when they buy you. It's the complete package, the whole shebang, everything and the kitchen sink – and it works a lot like any other brand.

Here's what I'm talking about...

Imagine you're in the supermarket looking at shelf upon shelf of washing powders. Essentially, they all do the same thing: get your clothes clean. So how do you choose which one to put in your basket? Each powder has a brand, conveyed through its packaging, colours, typeface, etc that subliminally delivers messages about what else you'll get besides clean clothes. It might be "I wash clothes and I'm kind to the environment". It might be "I wash clothes and I save you money". It might be "I wash clothes and they'll smell like a sea breeze". Learning about the 'and' helps you identify the thing that matters most to you and, with it, which one to buy.

The same applies to your personal brand. It's about telling people what you offer 'and' who is offering it. To explain further...

Your 'what' is the readily quantifiable aspects of your brand that let others know what you bring to the table: what qualifications you've gained, what knowledge you've learnt, what experience you've built up, what work you've done, what results you've delivered...what the hell you get paid for.

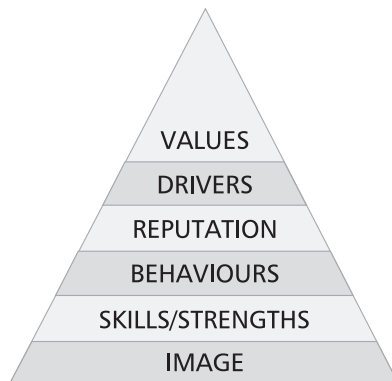
Your 'who' is the part that tells people who it is that's bringing that 'what' to the table: your personality, your motivators, your character, your attitude, your morality...what the hell it is that makes you tick.

You need both parts to be working positively in your personal brand for people to want to buy it.

However, if either your 'what' or your 'who' isn't hitting the mark, that buy-in can't happen – for example, if you're a technical whizz at your job (a positive 'what') but a boring dullard to work with (a negative 'who'). Or if you're great fun to work with (a positive 'who') but useless at your job (a negative 'what').

THE PERSONAL BRAND PYRAMID

When I started working with clients, I soon realised that just defining them by their 'what' and 'who' wasn't enough because their brands were more nuanced than that. So I came up with a format that built on that – the Personal Brand Pyramid:



(And if you did GCSE Sociology at school like I did, yes, it looks a lot like Maslow's hierarchy of needs.) To explain a little more, here's a brief overview of the six elements that make up your personal brand, which we'll cover in much greater depth later.

Values

Your Values are the principles by which you live your life, the moral compass you use to define right and wrong. Think of them as the foundations upon which your personal brand is built. (Which is ironic because they sit at the top of the pyramid.)

Drivers

Your Drivers are the things that motivate you to do what you do, to be who you are, that push you to succeed. They're what you need to be happening in order to be happy.

Reputation

In a nutshell, your Reputation is what you're known for (or want to be known for), the thing you communicate so clearly people think of it the instant they hear your name.

Behaviours

Your Behaviours describe your personality and character. They're what you say and do as an outward communication of those deeper Values and Drivers.

Skills/Strengths

Your natural talents, the things you excel at, whether technical or behavioural, plus how you utilise your knowledge and experience – these are your Skills/Strengths.

Here's what I'm talking about...

To help you know the difference: a Skill is something you had to learn how to do and then, with practice, got good at. A Strength is something you're born with, that comes naturally to you and can't simply be taught to others.

And last, but certainly not least...

Image

Your Image is the packaging for your brand – how you look (your clothes, accessories, body language, eye contact) and how you sound (your tone of voice, volume, choice of words). This forms the base of the pyramid because your Image is where people first access your brand, gathering clues to the other five elements.

The top three elements in the pyramid are what I call the ‘intangibles’; they’re the emotionally-based, deep and meaningful stuff that deliver a lot but can be hard for others to get a handle on. The bottom three elements comprise the ‘tangibles’; they’re based on logic, in so much as people can readily see what you’re wearing, hear what you’re saying, tell what you’re good at and experience your behaviour.

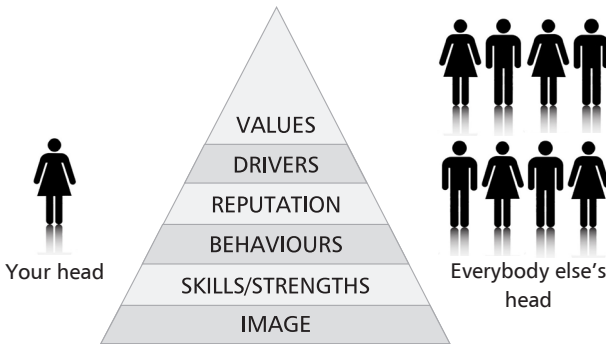
Today, the emphasis for sharing your brand with others is shifting from the tangible levels to the intangible ones. What’s required is to set out your stall not just with the functional value of your skills (what you offer) but the emotional value too (who is offering it). The stronger the emotional connection people can make, the better the buy-in to your brand.

Here’s what I’m talking about...

A survey by Burson-Marsteller found that 50% of a company’s reputation is directly linked to its CEO’s reputation. It’s something Richard Branson understands well. He spends time putting himself out there as the human face of his companies, so that when they hit problems (as they often do) he still gets reasonably favourable press. Compare that to Tony Hayward, the CEO of BP no-one had seen or heard of before the 2010 oil disaster off the US coast. With no buy-in to his personal brand journalists found it a lot easier to rip him to shreds, even when what he was saying was fair comment. (Although complaining “I’d like my life back” didn’t help his cause.)

WHERE YOUR BRAND EXISTS

For the most part, this book is about defining and promoting what you see as your personal brand. However, it's important to realise that your brand exists in two places:



It starts with a first impression that takes literally the blink of an eye. That's because, according to a study conducted at Princeton University in 2006, you need only one-tenth of a second to gather enough information to suss someone out. We're not talking an in-depth character assessment but more an initial impression to answer the question "Do I like them or not?". (The study looked specifically at people's ability to gauge a stranger's trustworthiness, attractiveness, likeability, competence and aggressiveness.)

Now, you may be thinking, "I've got a tenth of a second to work out all that...how the heck?!" It's a lot easier than you might think though because your brain's doing it without you even realising.

When our brain experiences something for the first time, its primary need is to understand how to react to it. Specifically, the amygdala (a small part of your brain responsible for emotional response) is on standby to implement our fight, flight or freeze reaction. This goes back to prehistoric times when if a caveman happened upon an animal, he had to quickly decide if it was something to eat (in which case to fight) or something that might eat him (requiring flight or freeze as a response).

To decide the best course of action, our brain is pre-programmed to search out clues to discern what we're dealing with, gathered using all five of the body's senses, to a greater or lesser degree.

Your sense of sight will look for clues; for example, an expensive watch could give you an idea of someone's wealth. Your sense of hearing will listen for clues; a regional accent could give you an idea of someone's upbringing. Your sense of touch will feel for clues; a firm handshake could give you an idea of someone's confidence. Your sense of smell also picks up clues; a strong whiff of cigarettes could give you insight into someone's lifestyle. On the odd occasion, you may even use your sense of taste to gather clues (though licking people's faces isn't the best etiquette).

But a clue is only useful once you've interpreted what it means. To do that, your brain turns to your 'mental reference library' – the place where you've stored every memory and experience, the moral values instilled in you, the cultural and social expectations you adhere to, etc. Based on what's in there, it then decides how you feel about that clue: positive, negative or neutral.

You need to remember though, not everyone's mental reference library contains the same information (they've not lived the exact same life you have), so a clue could be interpreted very differently.

If you meet someone who's wearing the same watch as you, based on your mental reference library, your brain might think, "Hey...I've got that watch and I'm a fantastic person, so I'm going to assume this person is pretty fantastic too." It may not be true of course, but in the absence of other information (which your brain will carry on gathering the longer you spend time with the person) it goes with its initial instinct.

However, someone else might spot the same person's watch and think, "That's the watch my boss wears – and he's a complete prat – so I'm going to assume this person is a complete prat too."

Whilst you're gathering clues about the person you've just met, remember they're doing the same to you – and your brand has been created in their mind. (Plus, according to a 2004 study by the University of Minnesota, the opinions we form in the first minutes play a major role in determining the course of the relationship.)

Let me be clear though, your first impression is just that – an impression. It's a great place to start in working another person out, but it's also important to try and avoid any bias that may creep in (whilst understanding others may still be biased towards you).

Here's what I'm talking about...

I was delivering a workshop for a group of relationship managers in the insurance industry. Nine out of the 10 attendees were male and middle-aged. One was female, in her late 20s. She stood out not just because of her gender and age, but because of her look. She had tattoos filling both arms, plus a large plug expanding her ear-lobe. She said she knows the moment people meet her they're pre-judging her as a “rock chick without two brain cells to rub together”. So she always put in the extra effort to show, far from being bereft of grey matter, she's a very clever gal who is excellent at her job. Realistically, she knew she could make her life easier by covering up her tattoos and removing the plug from her ear. But she said it mattered too much to her to be who she is, so she decided to accept the situation and work around it. Was it fair to be judged by people's bias? No. Was she being pragmatic about the world we live in? Yes.

Of course, someone with different priorities might take a different view. If they felt the impression their image created was detrimental to what they wanted to achieve, they might be happy to sacrifice a bit of self-expression and tone down their look. Neither is right nor wrong – it's about taking into account not only your view of the world, but how others view it, then making a conscious decision. Because simply believing the world should be free from bias doesn't mean it is.

It doesn't stop with a first impression though. People will carry on picking up clues every time they come into contact with you, building a clearer (and hopefully more accurate) picture of your personal brand as they do.

YOU CAN'T PLEASE ALL THE PEOPLE

As a final bit of background, there's something important I want to share with you. Pay attention now because this is the key to personal brand happiness:

Not everyone will buy your brand – accept it.

That's exactly as it should be because trying to make everyone a fan of your brand is like trying to get Madonna to act her age – you're on a hiding to nothing. But if you embrace who you are, even the imperfections, you can be successful just by being yourself.

Here's what I'm talking about...

Years ago, I read an interview with Michael Bublé that elevated him to my personal brand hero. In it, he revealed that some people walk out of his concerts because of his bad language and that he regularly receives letters of complaint from fans. He said, "Almost every night my agents will say to me, 'Well kid, 30 people wanted their money back.' At first it was a real worry [for them]. They kept saying, 'Mike, you're losing the audience.' Especially when I wasn't playing to that many people. I remember my American agent saying, 'Tonight it was huge, 70 people wanted their money back.' And I said, 'Give them their money back. I don't want them at my show. I don't want some stuck-up prudes [who] can't laugh at themselves.' Give me my kind of people and we'll be fine." Because, while 30 - 70 people walked out, hundreds and hundreds more stayed. They weren't offended. They liked what they heard. He's now one of the most successful recording artists of all time – and he did it staying true to his personal brand.

PART 1: CREATING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

YOUR SIGNATURE DISH

Now you know the six elements that make up a personal brand and you understand why it's impossible to not have a brand, it's time for the hard work: you're going to start thinking about what your own personal brand is.

To help explain what you're going to do, think of yourself as a chef who's trying to create a signature dish – something that, out of all the dishes you can cook, showcases your talent with only a few key ingredients (just like your brand is there to do). I've created a five-step process to achieve just that, so let's get cracking with the first step...



Like any chef, you need to know what ingredients you have at your disposal before you can write your recipe. So put your pinny on because it's time for us to have a rummage in your pantry.

This exercise is all about making you think long and hard about who you are and what makes you tick, writing down your answers along the way. (You'll need paper and something to write with, unless you're less old-school than me, in which case get your iPad out.)

What follows is a series of questions, covering each of the six brand elements, aimed at kicking off your thinking. You may not always come up with an answer, but you'll increase your chances

if you can put aside some quality time to get your brain in gear. For some of my clients, that's been while sitting on a sun lounger on holiday, away from the day-to-day stuff that could hinder their thinking. For others it's been the opposite; they've sat at their desk to get into a business frame of mind before answering. The important thing is to find the time and place where you do your best contemplation, because the better the ingredients at this stage, the better the final dish.

WHAT TO DO: Get thinking

Start with whichever of the six elements you want to tackle first (some people find it easier to begin with the intangible levels like Values and Drivers, others with the more tangible things like Behaviours and Image). Read each of the corresponding questions in turn, spending time thinking about them in detail.

As you're creating your brand to help you with your career or business, keep in a professional, rather than personal, frame of mind when you're answering. Really let your brain off the leash and write down whatever comes into your head, whether it's individual words, phrases or sentences, whether they're positive or negative. So long as they get out of your head and onto the page, you'll keep your thinking moving.

Keep going until you can't come up with anything else for that question, then move on to the next one. Don't worry if you read a question and your mind goes blank. We all process information in different ways, so some questions may suit you better than others.

Finally, to show you I'm not a heartless taskmaster cracking the whip and overloading your noggin, at the end of each set of questions you'll find examples of ingredients you can either pinch or use to spur your thinking on again. It's OK if your answers don't match the ones listed (maybe you've come at the questions from a different angle). Just keep on thinking...and we're off!