



eBook Edition 2013

International Blogathon

Personal Branding Across Cultures



Curated by Peter Sterlacci

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International Blogathon

Personal Branding Across Cultures

Contributors:

- Day 1:** Hank Chin - Taiwan
- Day 2:** Runa Magnúsdóttir - Iceland
- Day 3:** Emery Kaze - Luxemborg
- Day 4:** Paul Copcutt - Canada
- Day 5:** Richard Anderson - Australia
- Day 6:** Dr. Amit Nagpal - India
- Day 7:** Marcela Reyes - Colombia
- Day 8:** Paolo Feroletto - United Kingdom
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- Day 10:** Malak Oussidhoum - Morroco
- Day 11:** Damien Colmant - Belgium and France
- Day 12:** Petek Kabakci - Turkey
- Day 13:** Nelson Emilio - Portugal
- Day 14:** Marina Vogopoulou - Greece
- Day 15:** Megan Fitzgerald - Italy
- Day 16:** Sital Rupareliar - Singapore
- Day 17:** Anna Rydne - Sweden
- Day 18:** Janet Brent - Phillipines

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International blogathon: Foreword by Paolo Feroletto

The latest offering from the Blogathon eBook series continues with an eclectic mix of global contributors. As Personal Branding is becoming more recognised as an important resource in communication, we look at how cultures have embraced the subject with varying degrees of success.

The diversity of content is exceptional, offering many angles on the subject with each contributor delivering through their own definitive personality and voice. The Blogathon is a wonderful example of how Social Media can bring people together to collaborate and share their knowledge, delivering informative and useful content.

The life experience of each contributor is evident, offering value to the reader: those looking for an introduction to the subject or to further develop their own Personal Brand. The benefits of exploring the eBook are clearly laid out with concise information that encourages immediate action, each with their own positive spin on the subject. I would encourage every reader to take time to read each contribution and discover how Personal Branding can impact on their daily lives.

On a personal level, I am grateful to have been involved and to have had the opportunity to connect with so many interesting people. I look forward to future collaborations and a continuation of the Blogathon series. Enjoy the eBook!





Personal Branding Across Cultures: Introduction by Peter Sterlacci

My friend and fellow Reach Certified Personal Branding Strategist Walter Akana recently posed this question on his blog:

'Is the concept of personal branding at risk of 'jumping the shark?'

'Jumping the shark' is a Hollywood phrase coined for the moment when people realize a television program has outlived its appeal. The phrase can be applied to a wide variety of situations -- basically any situation, person, or movement that has taken a turn for the worse and is unredeemable.



Can we say that 'personal branding' has run its course? To me it really comes down to the term being misused or misunderstood around the world. Often attaching the word 'branding' to the word 'personal' is the root cause of much of the criticisms I have come across. I was intrigued by the use (or misuse) of personal branding around the world and wanted to explore this deeper. As a personal branding strategist in Japan I have spent the past 3 years trying to bring personal branding into the Japanese culture. It has been a challenge to say the least. I needed to know if others were experiencing challenges as well. Hence, the motivation to recruit a handful of experts to analyze the role of personal branding in different cultures.

At the end of the day personal branding was born as a 'western' concept. The culture in the US, for example, empowers individuals to use personal branding in the way it was meant to be used -- understand what is authentic, differentiating, and compelling about you and consistently apply this to your life. Can this work in other cultures? After all, people are people and we all have a unique value we bring to the world. Don't we? But, do deeply rooted cultural values and expectations create barriers that prevent personal branding from being embraced around the world?

Walter Akana's question above forces use to remember that we don't BUILD a personal brand. This idea of building suggests that we are creating something - perhaps an image. Walter says, "a personal brand is a reputation. It's not something your create. It's something you earn". Meg Guiseppi also points out that "people are NOT brands, but we ALL have a personal brand."

The 18 contributors to this eBook are experts within the cultures and countries they represent. They are all pioneers in helping true personal branding grow around the world, regardless of the challenges they face. In the following 18 articles you will learn about these challenges including:

- The "Crab mentality" in the Philippines. Out of jealousy or insecurity, success is often looked down upon as being elite and snobbish.
- "Jante's Law" in Sweden. This un-written law deeply rooted in Swedish and Scandinavian cultures says, "don't think your are better than anyone else."

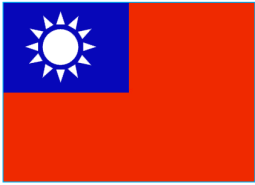
Yes, in every culture represented barriers to personal branding exist in varying degrees. Yet in all 18 cultures the seeds for personal branding have been planted and have taken root - deeper in some for sure! What I have learned from curating these 18 articles is simply this:

Personal branding has not run its course. *Far from it.*

As personal branding specialists it is now our duty to nurture these personal branding seeds using whatever means necessary to enable them to grow and prosper in our respective cultures. If not, personal branding just might 'jump the shark.' Enjoy this book and share it with others by tweeting:

"I'm learning about Personal Branding Across Cultures in this FREE eBook via @PeterSterlacci"





3 Powerful Elements for Personal Branding in Taiwan

Hank Chin
www.ipibresume.com/blog



I do believe history and events will affect people’s thinking, intangibly and naturally influencing individuals to do personal branding. Thus, let me introduce Taiwan briefly, which also highly relates to the following content. Taiwan, **NOT** Thailand, is a small island next to China. As a Taiwanese, honestly speaking, we have complicated emotion with China and Japan because we belonged to China before 1895 and then Japanese colonized Taiwan until 1945.

Over 1960-1990, Taiwan’s economy experienced strong economic growth, taking us from an undeveloped country to a developing one, and until now, we are famous for the electronics industry, like HTC, ACER, ASUS, CHIMEI, etc., entering a developed country, too. We have our own democratic government now, but are usually absent in some important international organizations or conferences, like United Nations, WHO, etc. due to the sovereignty issue between Taiwan and China.

The above facts and emotion result in three specific and important elements that will influence personal branding thinking. If you learn and master them, you can effectively enhance and spread your brand sooner than expected.

1. Tie-to-Taiwan

From 2012, if you paid attention to some Chinese celebrities, especially “Taiwanese,” you will definitely notice the first element from their public speaking, which I call “*Tie-to-Taiwan*.”

Taiwan is a small island that has little awareness and visibility worldwide because of ongoing tension with China. With China growing stronger, more and more people living in Taiwan feel nervous and care about their identity more than before - **being a Taiwanese**.

Thus, you can notice when Ang Lee and Jeremy Lin said they can’t be so successful without Taiwan or they love Taiwan so much, their news and speaking will be fast spread here, effectively catching the front page of major newspapers and TVs for a couple of days, strengthening their personal brand.

From my observation, current Taiwanese needs a hero to admire, and thus adding the “tie-to-Taiwan” element into your personal branding will give you a strong leg up in emotion.



2. Underdog

Do you know who donated the most money to aftermath of the massive earthquake and tsunami in Japan on 3/11/11? Yes, Taiwan. Why?

Affiliation is of course one of the powerful factors. But, I feel most Taiwanese naturally tend to stand up for the weak and sympathize the poor. We want to help the weak and see them grow to strive for success, perhaps because we’ve always been bashed internationally all the time.

Consequently, this inborn characteristic has us prefer and easily relate to an underdog story, especially from a super underdog to a star, just like Jeremy Lin, “Linsanity.” Ang Lee has the same story as well, from a stay-at-home director and father, counting on his wife as a breadwinner, to a famous director internationally. We like a story that people start from nothing and then get recognized by an unexpected opportunity and never-give-up spirit.

Therefore, when you seize a chance to tell a story to enhance your personal brand, you should remind yourself of the underdog point and combine this into some plots, which will attract the attention of many Taiwanese.





3. Digital island

As I mentioned, Taiwan is renowned for her electronics industry, backed up by the convenient 3G and wireless networks.

Taiwan has the highest average amounts of cell phones per person. In 2011, the penetration rate of mobile phones in Taiwan was 120%, meaning everyone has 1.2 mobile phones, and in 2015, the estimated penetration rate of smart phones will be 56.8%, quite high. So, you can expect over half of Taiwanese will check your personal brand and read your brand story by mobile phones, the younger, the more likely.

This is a trend that we can not resist but only tap into, so you should react to this phenomenon and start to build your personal brand online. Now, building a blog/website will be still your priority since LinkedIn in Taiwan is not as popular as that in the West.

As Taiwan owns the highest mobile phone penetration rate worldwide, it makes perfect sense to build your personal brand in a digital way, which is very efficient and widespread. Your readers can catch your news anytime and anywhere.

Culture Matters

Lastly, Taiwan is an island filled with talented and hard-working people who want to build their personal brands in their professional areas or lives. The three elements tie-to-Taiwan, underdog story, and digital island are something you should always keep in mind when doing personal branding here.

I believe when you understand your history and culture more, your personal branding skill will soon be upgraded from the “Minor League” to the “Major League.” *By the way, I welcome you to visit Taiwan!*





The Icelandic Personal Brand Attribute... Cool or Calm?

Runa Magnusdottir
www.runamagnus.com



A few days ago my sister graduated from medical school. When you consider the decade of schooling that goes into it, our family is **“You come from ICELAND?!! WOW... HOW COOL”** the most common reaction I get from people when I introduce myself internationally.

Their surprise and interest to learn more about my country is genuine; their look of surprise, sometimes feels like they are looking at an alien, most often follows with a sentence such as:

“I’ve always wanted to visit that place,” or “My friends just visited your country and they loved it,” or

“Is it true that the sun doesn’t sit in the summer?” or “Is it true that you are had the first openly gay prime-minister in the world?”

These comments are followed by stories about what they saw, how they felt, what their connections with the Icelandic people gave them etc. All questions and stories that relate to the feeling they’ve got when thinking of the country of Iceland.

Being an Icelander, born and raised and living in a small island (the whole island about the same size as the state of Kentucky in USA) with only 330.000 inhabitants, my little heart is always filled with joy and pride of belonging to a country that so many people are showing interest in.

And I do use the fact that I’m born, raised and living in Iceland as one of my ways to distinguish myself as one of Europe’s Transformational Leaders and Speakers in the Leadership & Personal Branding Field.

So, What’s the Typical Personal Brand Attribute of an Icelander?

According to an amusing and interesting book called “The Little Book of the Icelanders” written by Alda Sigmundsdottir, you can find quite a few interesting attributes, descriptions of the “typical Icelander”, amongst them are:

Icelanders as a nation, value their independence above all else

Icelanders are a literary bunch, they love books... yes even the Old Icelandic Sagas including the Nordic Kings and settlement of nearby lands, therefore most Icelanders will proudly say they are Vikings!

Icelanders are informal, and address everyone by their first names, irrespective of that person’s age or social standing.

Some Icelanders have very odd professions – at least according to the phone book where everybody is listed first by their first name, than their last. According to the phone book, you will find 6 people who name their professions as “a winner”. Nine people say they are “sorcerers” 14 “Ghostbusters” one “formal tough guy” and there are even two people who are listed there as “hen whisperers”

Icelanders have a sense of dry, self-effacing, sardonic and deadpan humour, they can’t take anything seriously at least not themselves.

Icelanders are workaholics. It’s considered to be a virtue to work... and work hard long hours... not necessarily giving more productive results... but a virtue it is!

Icelanders believe in trolls & elves! Sounds weird? “Well, what’s different with that or believing in Santa Claus or other religious persons? “A common reply from an Icelander when asked about our special believes in trolls and elves.

Icelandic women are strong and independent. 85% of all Icelandic women are active in the Icelandic working world, actively working outside their home.

Iceland is the #1 country in the world when it comes to gender equality.

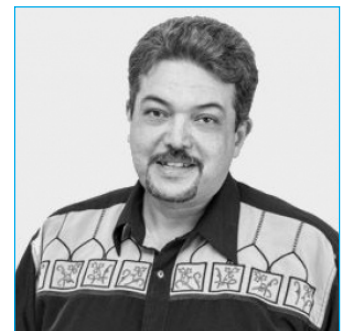
Needless to say, these are only a part of the culture behind the personal attributes belonging to the Icelandic nation. Like everyone else on this beautiful planet of ours; every single Icelander has their own personal stories, strengths, knowledge and attributes that are part of our personal brands as independent Icelanders.





Personal Branding in Luxembourg – At The Intersection of Cultures

Emery Kaze
www.emerykaze.com



In today’s economic climate and highly competitive landscape, we are, more than ever, in need of a tool to be more in control of our career and business. Personal branding is an extremely powerful tool to stand out and demonstrate our value to be ahead of the pack and open up doors and opportunities. It helps individuals to stand out in their companies, and entrepreneurs to promote their business and attract more clients.

Luxembourg is not an exception. Situated at the intersection of German, French and Belgian borders, Luxembourg hosts a significant international population. Over its 2,600 square kilometer area, where cultures meet in the heart of Europe, Luxembourg is making its very first steps in personal branding, but at different speeds. While the international community and companies see opportunities in branding their employees, the local and cross-border companies are more skeptical about challenges and risks they perceive.

Some Start in Luxembourg

The HR services, staffing and placement industry, especially international groups, such as Galilei (a Randstad company), are pioneering in personal branding adoption in Luxembourg. They acknowledge the importance of personal branding as an essential strategic advantage tool in Luxembourg’s HR and job market. Some of them already started to offer to their candidates personal branding programs to help them stand out in their job search and throughout their professional careers.

Aware of the value of personal branding in personal and professional development, some business networking associations are joining the personal branding movement in Luxembourg. The Network, the women’s International Business and Professional Organization in Luxembourg, and ILA – Institut Luxembourgeois des Administrateurs, that promotes the profession of Directors, are good examples.

They highlight that business professionals need to improve their personal brand image and increase their personal impact. Both associations have recently introduced a personal branding training in their programs for their members.



Confusion in Local Companies

Many local culture companies in Luxembourg still have an incomplete vision of personal branding. They see personal branding as an opportunity to promote the corporate brand using certain employees that get promoted as external communicators on social medias. This understanding of personal branding, not only ignores one of its most precious values, which is the alignment of employees and corporate brands, and enhancement of employees loyalty, but also comes with a perception of false risks. Some of those are the loss of control, poaching of skills, non-alignment of personal and corporate objectives. These companies obviously become more reluctant at adopting personal branding for their employees.

Luxembourg is very active in promoting business networking and is very attractive to international / multinational companies. This creates a powerful mix and dynamic cultural transfer across its population. I believe that the coming few years will hopefully see a significant movement of personal branding adoption in Luxembourg. This will be led by the international companies, followed by the local and cross-border companies. Thanks to the proximity of cultures over a small land.





In Canada is it Really all About the Personal Brand, eh?

Paul Copcutt
www.paulcopcutt.com



In the 1970's, Sir Peter Ustinov once famously described Toronto, the biggest city in Canada and 5th largest in North America, as "New York run by the Swiss!". When I first came to Canada in the 1990's I had a similar feeling, except I always described the country as America with British attitude. What we both meant by our definitions was that Canada has its own brand, a mix of cosmopolitan, consumerism but with a quieter, more polite, even reserved approach. Overall I do not feel this has drastically changed.

Diversity in Personal Branding

But what I believe to be truly unique about Canada is its diversity. Which presents very unique challenges when it comes to personal branding. Canadians identify themselves first as whichever country they or even their families originate from and then as Canadians. So you find people introducing and describing themselves as Russian Canadians or Italian Canadian (Toronto would be the 7th largest Italian city by population!). Almost Canadians with a small 'c'.

American Influence

The influence in Canada of American culture is huge, after all even though Canada ranks geographically as the 2nd largest country in the world, 80% of Canadians live within 93 miles of the 5,500 mile US border, over 50% of them in a 700 mile corridor between Quebec City and Windsor, leaving lots of space for the rest of the country! This means an embracing, almost desire in some cases, to be more American than anything else and why I feel personal branding was more readily accepted as a legitimate career management and development tool so soon after it was first written about in the late 90's.

Canadian Differences Eh!

Most of the personal branding work that I do in Canada is with professionals, executives and small business owners in that focused geographical corridor. The reasons they choose to do the work is likely similar to many other countries around the world. A desire to get ahead, leverage their skills and strengths and be more purposeful about their direction in life and business. But having worked with many Americans too I do find a distinct difference between the two when it comes to communicating their brands, how much they are willing and/or comfortable in expressing who they are to others.

I believe this happens for two distinct reasons;

1. We are the polite nation. A little ironical when we are a country passionate about one of the more physical sports, ice hockey! There is a standing joke in Canada that if you want to complain you write a letter!

In general I do find Canadians very considerate of others, perhaps more so than other cultures, one of my first impressions was the consistent "You're welcome" response to a thank you. We do not want to appear as brash. Often I am asked if I consider a particular suggestion or strategy as 'bragging'.

2. The cultural and historical struggle, the almost constant pulling between that latest trend pop culture desire and its unique diversity. An official bilingual country, census reports have also identified almost 100 other languages spoken and over 140 countries cultures represented in a population of around 33 million.

This leads to many discussions about how someone is perceived in their own community if they are too 'unlike' their own culture, becoming almost too westernized. The peer pressure may be strong.

The Future of Personal Branding in Canada

While the majority of Canadians are still primarily identified as English or French Canadians and therefore likely very accepting of using personal branding, the continued positive immigration policy will see a third of Canada being made up of visible minorities in less than 20 years.

This may offer challenges to the traditional personal branding methodology. The concepts will be very new to many and the value may not be as evident. The varied languages and styles may call for greater customization of not just the communication piece but also the initial exercises and work to help uncover their brands. Of course personal branding is about embracing who we truly are, our authentic selves and finding opportunities that are a fit for us. *The uniqueness of Canadians might just be an added advantage, eh?*





In Australia it's Authentic Branding

Richard Anderson
www.pointahead.com.au



Australians are people who value informality, directness and equality. They are individualistic, work hard, take pride in their achievements and like to win. BUT they do not like to “blow their own trumpets” or share their softer sides. They like their achievements to speak for them! So personal branding can be quite a confronting concept for an Australian.

Are Australians Suspicious about Personal Branding?

As an intrepid branding specialist I often have to overcome the initial response of my clients – suspicion! They can easily equate branding to product marketing and be suspicious because of past (often unhappy) experience of false and exaggerated claims. They also feel that personal branding fits more comfortably into American culture where standing out and self-promotion are encouraged – not so in Australia where we do not readily embrace our Tall Poppies. Even though Australians tend to be early adopters of new ideas and products they do not follow blindly – they need to see the value to them of something new before they are ready to accept it.

With the changing nature of work – where specialists are valued over generalists – the case for personal branding IS very strong. Having a strong brand is a necessity for all careerists rather than just good PR for the few high-flyers.

So, you can see the challenges I face in getting my clients to accept personal branding!

Firstly I need to show them that in uncovering their own personal brand they have the means to be clear and authentic in who they are in all of their dealings – and that this does not require becoming a pumped-up self-promoter.

Secondly my clients need to accept that they are more than the sum of their achievements – they are also human beings who bring a wealth of personal qualities to their work.

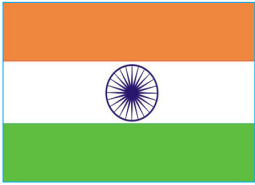
Feedback and Data Bridges the Gap

The 360Reach Personal Branding Survey tool helps me overcome both of these objections. As Australians tend to be more rational and matter-of-fact in their dealings they tend to value data over soft skills. The feedback provided by the 360Reach tool helps bridge the gap here. It is a way of introducing the emotional brand elements packaged in the form of data. My clients will accept the importance of and opportunity to differentiate themselves with their emotional brand attributes when their raters spell it out for them!

My experience of working with some seriously hard-headed clients is that once they understand what the data is telling them there is a high acceptance of the personal branding process. They are now on track and their individualistic Australian style kicks in as they strive to be their best with an expanded understanding of their (rational and emotional) authentic brand and how to express it.

With continued communication and education personal branding will continue to grow and be accepted within the Australian market but only if it can be seen as authentic and not as a marketing exercise based on half-truths.





Indians Embrace Personal Branding, but Don't Hug it Tightly Yet!

Dr. Amit Nagpal
www.enlargeexcelve.com



In spite of the increasing westernization, Indians are clinging to their cultural roots and community centric attitudes. The joke doing the rounds is that, "Indians don't talk about sex, now they are opening up to talking lovemaking. Indians don't talk about personal branding, now they are opening up to storytelling (for inspiring others & branding as a byproduct). Passionate knowledgepreneurs & early adopters are taking the lead and demonstrating to the fellow countrymen, the power of personal branding through social media.

In fact, personal branding via mass media and books has existed in the country since decades and is restricted to celebrity management, rather than celebrity creation. Now only the celebrity creation through social media game has begun.

Challenge 1: The myth that Personal Branding is done by celebrities only as it's too expensive

Hugging Opportunity - Social Media is new to India (from professional and branding perspective) and majority of the professionals and entrepreneurs are yet to realize the power (and affordability) of personal branding through social media.

Offline personal branding tools are either too expensive (hiring PR agency for example) or too slow (writing a book for example). But internet particularly social media has changed the rules of the game. Even a middle class person (into a full-time job or business) who has an internet connection can build his brand over 2-3 years.



Challenge 2: The perception that Personal Branding is about self-promotion

Hugging Opportunity - Personal Branding is about communicating your value. In fact one can inspire others by sharing one's success stories and the brand can be a byproduct. In community centric cultures like India, where the focus is on the community and not on self, storytelling is already becoming a popular tool to inspire others (and build the brand too in the process). Here is my story on how I realized the power of storytelling and became a professional storyteller.

In fact, personal branding can help you grow as a person, make you a better collaborator and make you even more large-hearted. Here is an interesting article on the subject, "7 Personal Branding Lessons you Learn by Falling in Love"

Challenge 3: The belief that Personal Branding is not necessary

Hugging Opportunity - Majority of the people who know about personal branding also believe that it is not necessary unless you are in top management or top entrepreneurs league. We need to remember that human beings have some illogical tendencies, jumping to conclusions and halo effect for example. If we have not communicated what we stand for, we are giving chance to people to jump to the wrong conclusions about us.

Others may create wrong perception and may do enough damage to your brand before you start the process. Personal Branding is the process of becoming what you aspire and communicating what you stand for. Personal branding also takes care of countering wrong perceptions which may be becoming popular about you (in the online and offline worlds).

Challenge 4: The ideology that any branding including Personal Branding is very slow

Hugging Opportunity - Very few people understand how brands are built but many people understand the term goodwill and believe that it takes a very long time to build goodwill.

If you are extremely hardworking and can spare 6-8 hours per day, you can build a strong brand in less than 1 year. But even if you are an extremely busy person, you can still build a strong brand in 2-3 years with consistent efforts and learning the social media strategies. Though many personal branding activities are DIY (Do it Yourself), if you take the advice of a professional, you can do it much faster and in a more effective way. The one who sows the seeds of personal branding efforts reaps higher salaries in job, higher profits from customers and higher respect and recognition in society.





Challenge 5: Personal Branding is not required at all (only organizations and products should become brands)

Hugging Opportunity - Many Indians also think that personal branding is not required at all as people only serve organizations. Hence, only organizations and products should do brand building and people need not do. If we go by this logic, parents should not give names to their children because even naming our children is also branding. If have already been branded by our parents through the names given to us, why let our names be like weak and local brands, why not make them strong, respected and over a period of time global?

Challenge 6: Personal Branding is about image manipulation and not about uncovering our potential and inner greatness

Hugging Opportunity - Branding is about manipulating the perception and image and thus fabricating a lie. Here is an interesting comparison between Personal Branding and Image management on Google trends (search of both keywords internationally on Google over the last few years)

Social Media in any case requires hard work, which necessitates passion. Here is an interesting story about how we can bring out our peak potential and creativity in the personal branding process and bring out our inherent greatness, “3 Life Lessons that led to Social Media Success”

Challenge 7: The herd mentality behavior is strong

Hugging Opportunity - My prospects tell me, “If personal branding is such a powerful tool, why are others not doing it.” Being a developing country, most of the people tend to avoid risk taking and wait for others, encouraging herd mentality.

I used to receive many queries for personal branding coaching (and outsourcing of social media activities), but almost everyone wanted to see success stories of others.

Recently, I began to publish the success stories of my clients, which is finally resulting in conversion of queries into clients. But I want every knowledgepreneur, every SME entrepreneur, every journalist, every academician, every author, every student, every introvert to Enlarge, Excel and Evolve into a personal brand and express their deep passion.

So if you respect your individuality and want others also to respect it, then embrace personal branding and give it a tight warm hug. ***Rest assured, you will love it like mad.***





The Colombian Personal Brand, not What You Think!

Marcela Reyes
www.latitudescoach.com



“Drug trafficking, violence, guerrilla warfare, and kidnappings”.

These words and images are probably some of the first that come to mind when someone mentions the country of Colombia (not to be confused with Columbia, a city in South Carolina). All over the world, people view Colombia as a country laden with drugs and corruption, a reputation made popular by the media’s exploitation of the reality of decades past—a reality that is no longer true.

The Happiest People in the World

While this perception makes for exciting movies, outside of the cinema Colombia has unfortunately also been a victim of bad press, poor perception and negative remarks for many years. Despite all these stereotypes and negative remarks, Colombians are reportedly some of the happiest people in the world. This country’s people, according to a 2012 Gallup Poll, are almost twice as happy as the global average. Not bad for a place like Colombia, given the reputation that it has.

Some famous Colombians include names like Shakira and Sofia Vergara. In addition to the exotic beauty that these two are known for, these women share the qualities of being joyful and highly spirited. It is no accident that these two Colombians have similar brand attributes—these women are reflections of their Colombian heritage, a culture alive with flavor and energy.

Besides the happiness of its people, Colombians share a diverse and rich cultural background, with a broad range of distinct groups that have unique customs, accents, social patterns, and cultural adaptations.

Colombians accept diversity and differences. Music is part of our daily lives. We find excuses to dance whenever and wherever we can. We love beauty and aesthetics. Colombian women are considered some of the most beautiful in the world and for good reason. We like to take care of ourselves and look our best because personal hygiene and physical appearance are regarded very highly. We may even invite you to eat at home with our family. And, as in the rest of Latin America, time is not a top priority here. We are usually “fashionably late”.



A Brand of Many Layers

A value that is integral to business interaction is the emphasis we place on relationships. We like to get to know you well at both a personal and a business level. Look at one of the more recognized Colombian brands, Café de Colombia, a brand fronted by the likeable Juan Valdez. It is with Juan Valdez, not the name of the coffee company with whom consumers build a relationship. A business relationship with a Colombian will be both personal and professional. Colombians want to get to know you, and expect you to be interested in their lives as well. Juan Valdez is a reflection of this Colombian value, and remains an extremely successful icon of the brand of Café de Colombia.

Imagine the Colombian brand as one made up of many layers. The top layer is the most visible and the one of drugs and corruption. However, lying underneath, if you peel away that misleading skin, lies the authentic beauty of the Colombian brand—one that is more true to nature and based upon Colombian values and cultural norms.

Leaving the images of guerillas and drug lords behind, one can see the vibrant, colorful, and exotic flavor that emanates from Colombia and its people.





Personal Branding Slowly Finding its Place in The UK

Paolo Feroletto
www.creative-discovery.co.uk



Over the last few years the UK has seen a steady rise of interest in the subject of personal branding. Whereas it was once deemed ‘too American’ for the reserved Brit mentality, understanding it’s not all about self-promotion has led many people to take notice of the benefits of working on their personal brand.

There is real evidence showing areas such as leadership, recruitment and coaching having embraced personal branding. Graduates and job seekers are being encouraged to ensure their CV contains all the attributes of a compelling personal brand. Recruitment agencies are helping them identify the value they can bring to an organisation, and also match-make with companies pairing them up to make use their talents, interests and values.

The Different Faces of Personal Branding

Those wanting to develop their leadership skills understand the importance of developing a strong personal brand over time and remain flexible to the changes this can bring. A strong personal leadership brand allows all the true qualities of a leader to become known to their colleagues; this takes focus and patience.

I have been working with several groups of youngsters through enterprise academies and young leadership foundations, with the sole intention of helping them discover their own personal brand. This has led to many interesting results and feedback from organisations requiring more development work. There are certainly lots of positives to take from this and I feel the next generation are well placed to take on board the importance of personal branding as their careers develop.



I believe the media too has played a large part in bringing personal branding to a wider audience. The exposure (often, over exposure) of ‘celebrities’ gives PR companies the opportunity to exercise a certain control of their clients’ personal brand and market it to great effect. A perfect example being David Beckham, who is fully aware of his brand value, something that has been expertly developed by his own management and PR companies.

The rise of social media platforms, particularly Twitter, have given users a platform for their ‘brand’s voice’ which some use more effectively than others. Yet I feel that certain personalities are using the opportunity to the detriment of their brand, without a real strategy, focusing more on instant gratification rather than developing a long-term considered approach.

Whilst working with some clients on their company brand, I have been asked many times about my personal branding work and it has led to many interesting collaborations for me. There is definitely a greater awareness of the subject and an interest of how it can help individuals develop. Network events are also a great place to observe how people are putting their personal brand into practice through their considered body language and interaction with others.

I have also noticed an increase in referral to colleagues who are style consultants, many of whom work with clients on their dress sense, exploring colours and styles that best suit them, thus creating another visual element of their personal brand. All of these elements are becoming more common in an increasingly competitive employment market.

Whilst I feel there is still a lot of work to be done to make personal branding less exclusive, ***I believe personal branding is slowly finding its rightful place here in the UK.***



Personal Branding Perception and Adoption in Thailand

Donn Pjongluck
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Consistent brand personality maintenance could prove to be difficult when a certain brand has an identical marketing style across the globe. The values and norms that seem most important to a given society vary across cultures (Chritton, 2012). This has the potential to bring out several brand personality interpretations. To make an amendment to this, slight tweaking of the marketing style of a certain brand for different cultures; seem to be advocated for by some companies. This should result to consistent representation of a brand across the globe, in spite of cultural differences. This may however, not always be necessary (Gelder, 2005).

Embracing Personal Branding

Personal branding would help bring about individuality and uniqueness among the people of Thailand thus helping them differentiate their expectations from various competitions they could be facing. Through personal branding, the Thais could gain the ability to inject their personalities into their self brands and businesses as well. This would help them be known for what they stand for as well as who they could be thus helping to bring about transparency and authenticity to oneself (Chabin, 2004). The Thais could as well be able to create awareness for one's services and products. Branding helps in sharing one's identity, as well as impact on the perception that others could have about oneself (Kaputa, & Kaputa, 2012).

Through personal branding the Thais could develop small business and self employment which would motivate them to build magnetic brands that would force more sales in much less time. Having a strong personal brand to them could be a big benefit in attracting customers, thus increasing revenue for oneself and the country at large. Personal branding could enable Thais become thought leaders through establishing themselves as experts and gaining recognition (Ohm, 2013).

How Thais are Branding Themselves Online

Social networks seem to gain a prominent place in usage of internet in Thailand. Consequently, traditional banner advertisements' reach seems to diminish favoring large social networks' advertisements. The major brands that operate in Thailand already seem to be making use of this transformation in online behavior (Kaputa, & Kaputa, 2012).



Also noticed could be the use of blogs by Thais to brand themselves, in which case 86 percent of Thai internet users have read blogs while 71 percent of them appear to have created blogs by themselves (Keegan, 2010).

How Thais can Build a Successful Personal Brand

The Thailand people seem to find difficulty in getting their government to support individuals' brand management initiatives. This could be as a result of the Thailand government not understanding the value of personal branding by its citizens. The Thai people can thus take an own initiative to educate their own government on personal branding benefits (Kapferer, 2008). Another difficulty could be that the Thais might be owning individual brand pieces such as brand identities, brand promises among others in which case they might not know how to translate these pieces into a brand building culture of their own.

The Thais can curb this by challenging one another on the formation of personal brands as well as teaching one another on the same (Ahlstrom, & Bruton, 2010). Both functionally and geographically diverse groups that exist in Thailand might be difficult to convince to embrace this idea of personal brands.

This might however be solved through identification of each group's burning issues and the discovery of how individual's personal brands could help solve these issues. (Tokuhama, 2011).





Personal Branding in Morocco: I love it! But can I?

Malak Oussidhoum
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When I first started talking about Personal Branding in Morocco, 3 years ago, the major feedback was: this concept looks amazing but do you think it would work here in Morocco? I wondered what caused this reaction in a society where people are great followers of north American and French cultures, both countries being the main destination for university education since the 70's.

Proximity to these 2 cultures, along with the Spanish one, impacted their lifestyles in fashion, luxury, musical tendencies and trends in general, but hardly in the behavior and the mentality. People's perception of modernity was basically upon following the image of developed countries, as long as the signs of modernity were related to image and in adopting the styles; that image was enough for communicating their modernism. So, when adopting a new "trend" which was Personal Branding, what could be the hic point?



Personal Branding? : I love the concept!

At first sight people love the idea to get promoted and be put in the limelight, they love the idea of "uniqueness" in a society where the rule is to be "alike" in order to stand out, they love the idea to be successful based on their merit, they love the idea to be able to manage their careers in a pro-active way, they love the idea of accessing notoriety for personal success.

...But ...

But there was reluctance in the process itself: "What would people think of me if they ever knew that I am getting help in order to develop my personal brand? (The famous ego ...) How would people perceive the fact that I communicate about my person? Wouldn't that be too much show-off? Plus, I have built a professional image that allows me to be in the future amongst those who have succeeded, even if I am not really fulfilled, and I have to give up on my passions, and my high-hopes are elsewhere...Plus, If I do it I would need the whole society to think like me in order for it to be successful, wouldn't I? "

Identity, authenticity and differentiation: Ok let's do it!

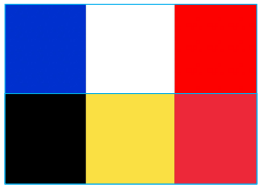
Authenticity, identity and differentiation, those were the words which attracted people who said: Yes, let's do it!

Knowing that they could assert themselves through their uniqueness, their identity as an individual, and stand out by communicating authentically about their vocation, they attempted the adventure successfully. Successfully, because despite all the reluctance, when they felt confident, they loved to talk about themselves, telling the story of their achievements. We are in a culture of acknowledgements; so, in order to get it, let it know ... authentically.

They understood that image is overall a question of communicating authentically about one's unique promise of value, which is at the end offering to others help and service ... isn't solidarity part of our culture after all? After having grasped all of this, they finally loved to see themselves through differentiation, what their assets were and how they could count on them to walk all the way towards success.

Definitely, in Morocco the shift is in looking at personal image through authentic communication!





The Challenges for Personal Branding in France and Belgium

Damien Colmant
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I am glad for this opportunity to connect with you! The objective of this post is to address the challenges Personal Branding is facing in France and Belgium (French-speaking part). Personal Branding in my region is taking on slowly. This is mostly due to cultural resistances. Fear of failure is probably the essential reason. Success on top of that is seen as suspicious.

Fear of Failure

Branding is by definition an entrepreneurship behavior. And it can be a very rewarding experience. But why then are young people and older ones not going through the adventure of entrepreneurship? They most often have a fear of failure: what am I going to say to my contacts if I fail? My failures will be tattooed on my forehead for everyone to see! How am I going to explain all this to a recruiter?

The French tend to see failure ... as a failure. It should instead be celebrated. Entrepreneurs and job seekers who succeed have done many mistakes before arriving where they are. Success is mostly not linear. The difference is rather in the speed in which they correct their mistakes or change strategy. Successful people tend to see failure as way to learn.



Success is Suspicious

There's a story that George W. Bush once said: The problem with the French is that they have no word for 'entrepreneur'. The French culture has seemed very anti-entrepreneur and suspicious of anyone trying to make money and build a business.

I myself have heard so many times the following comments when discussing the success of entrepreneurs:

That guy makes money on the back of others

One more taking advantage of the mass!

Networking is obtaining favors from others. It's even discriminating compared to people not having access to a network ...

If someone is showing wealth, the way he obtained it must be suspicious ...

Anyway, beyond these considerations, I am convinced Personal Branding will continue increase in popularity as a way for higher employability and entrepreneurship. And become as popular as in other parts of the world.

We all need to learn to create our own job and wealth for others instead of looking for an occupation.

This is why I turned into a Potential Awakener. Enjoy reading the other Blogathon articles!





Perception of Personal Branding in Turkey: at the Crossing of Three Continents

Petek Kabacki
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At a Crossing Point of Continents & Cultures

Turkey is located at the crossing point of the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Anatolia, the portion of Turkey located on the Asian continent, has a history going back to 10.000 B.C. Imagine the many civilizations that have lived in this land through the ages. As a result of Turkey's historical and geographical position, a mix of different cultures has long co-existed in Turkish society, and therefore it is not easy to make a simple definition of Turkish culture. As a sociologist and personal branding strategist, as well as a member of Turkish society, I will do my best to convey an objective and high level portrait of the interaction between personal branding and Turkish culture.

As we know, human "perception" is a neurological as well as a cultural process. Therefore, individuals in different cultures and sub-groups in a culture perceive the world differently. I am not able to make a complete and comparative analysis at this point because I offer personal branding coaching and consulting in Turkey to a segment composed of business people, in particular entrepreneurs and executives. Most of my clients are living in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. However, I observe that this group of people have internalized and embraced the dominant cultural values of Turkish society: Modesty, Honesty, and Community.



Perhaps one of the best reflections of Turkish values can be seen in the following poem by Sufi mystic RUMI Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi, (known as Rumi or Mevlana in Turkey)

Although we live in a fast-paced, dynamic economy, it is not enough to convince Turkish business people about benefits of personal branding in terms of business results. You need to clarify how personal branding is compatible and harmonious with deep cultural values.

I outline below how I reconcile misconceptions against personal branding with the needs and requirements of my audience and their intrinsic values:

Modesty vs Vanity

Personal branding is not about bragging, but being known and visible with who you are, what you offer, how you show up in the world, how you help other people succeed, your story, your wisdom, and your knowledge. It is not an inflated pride in oneself.

Honesty vs Fakery

A personal brand is always built upon your true self, your strengths, your passions and your unique promise of value. It is not a tool to induce people to think and act in a certain way.

Community vs Egocentricity

Personal branding is about clarifying and clearly communicating what you want for others, what transformation, solution or innovation you see for the world or your community, and why you are the right person for this mission. If people understand your mission, they are going to want to become involved to make the world a better place. You select the community you would like to serve. Only they make you a brand.

"Focus of Personal Branding is not being different but making a difference!"

Rumi says "Do not be satisfied with the stories that come before you. Unfold your own myth".

These are my observations and experiences as a personal branding coach and consultant in Turkey.

Happy Branding!



Personal Branding and the New Portuguese Discoveries

Nelson Emilio
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The Age of Discovery

Between 1415 and 1578 Portuguese were well-known by systematically exploring the Atlantic Ocean and the African coast. This led to the discovery of several Atlantic archipelagos, the eastern route to India that rounded the Cape of Good Hope and the discovery of Brazil. Portuguese also explored the Indian Ocean and established trading routes throughout most of southern Asia, and our discoveries were responsible for important advances in technology, nautical sciences, cartography, astronomy and ship building.

During this age of discovery several Portuguese like Infante Henry, better known as Henry the Navigator, Bartholomew Diaz, Ferdinand Magellan, Pedro Álvares Cabral and Vasco da Gama built their personal brands and left their mark in the history of Portugal and the World.

But why I'm telling you something that happened centuries ago? Well, because Portuguese are among the most talented people in the world, but for a long time we forgot about maintaining our personal brand and keep showing our unique value besides the hot sun, fresh Atlantic winds, wild beaches, great food and traditions we have in Portugal.

Today's Reality

Today we live in a society that evaluates professionals not only in light of the results achieved by them, but also the image they project both externally to customers and partners and internally among colleagues.

Today, due to the economic crisis we are facing in Portugal and the accelerated trend to diversify, globalize, connect and compete, we see that a university degree or expertise are only one part of success, we need to find new ways of showing our professional skills, our potential and values. This need led to an exponential growth of Personal Branding services in Portugal in the past years. It is now seen as one of the most powerful tools to drive the career and impact the organization.

Unfortunately the concept grew around a lot of misconceptions. Some understand it as self-marketing or image management, others as commercial strategy or that is only for celebrities. These misconceptions are mainly due to well known factors:

The association of the concept to world-famous personal brands like Cristiano Ronaldo, one of world's top soccer players, José Mourinho, one of world's best coaches and several Fado (the most widely recognized music of Portugal) and Pop singers; Image consultants that mix the concepts of Image Management and Personal Branding by focusing in the visual representation or packaging of each individual and forget the real YOU; Professionals with the main focus on marketing and social media and its usage to promote and "sell" a "person product" without considering the entire Personal Branding process;

People who are passionate about Personal Branding that don't really know what Personal Branding actually is, and use all communication channels for bragging instead of positioning themselves as an expert in a chosen profession or market. **From my point of view all the confusion around Personal Branding happens because almost everyone forgot the main element of Personal Branding, the PERSON.**

Of course it is important to promote our personal brand through different channels, but we cannot forget that Personal Branding is not about creating something new, a new ME, it's the opposite, is uncovering the best of each individual, what already exists and makes us authentic and unique, and only then express that authenticity and uniqueness using the online and offline tools available today. Clarifying personal branding concepts, process and expectations is key for a better understanding on how it can help professionals capitalizing on their "unique promise of value" and contribute to their job, team or corporation.

In Portugal this is clearly understood by many professionals that work or worked in a multinational corporate environment. Either by senior level executives who entered in personal branding processes sponsored by their companies, or by other professionals that went through this process in a career transition situation.

The New Age

The economic crisis turns up to be a wake-up call for many professionals in all sectors who are now more concerned about their careers. They are looking for professional services in Personal Branding area to help them be more successful, and by that avoiding to be a number in the unemployment population which is already over 17.8% and increasing. Personal Branding services are also sought by unemployed people and young college graduates who already grasp the need to better understand their value and how they can differentiate themselves from everyone else in order to get a job. I see Personal Branding in Portugal now becoming a top of mind awareness for some professionals in consultancy, sales and at senior level in most organizations. It is also a new concept and a new discovery for most Portuguese who are not used to exploring their unique value and promoting themselves.





Greeks: Naturally Born Personal Branding Strategists?

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Isn't Personal branding such an attractive idea? Finding out what makes you special, live it and make your life example your career flag. Surely, it must be a Greek who invented it... *or not?*

Us Greeks understand from a very young age the notions of "reputation" and "making a name for yourself". In a typical Greek family it is expected that you will not do anything to stain your good reputation. People care about their "good name" and will guard it feverishly. "Good reputation" is vital.

Greeks also have a natural flair for communication and networking. We find it only too easy to operate in networks and we appreciate the power of networking. Our family is really our first (and last) network. We use our networks to help both others and ourselves. We love making referrals and we believe a good referral is indicative of our own personality and efficiency. We think very highly of people who have managed to build strong networks and friendships.

We also love analysis and critique. We always discuss and analyze what makes someone special, successful, not successful, brilliant or not. We form very strong opinions about others' suitability for a role, or about their effectiveness, whether they deserve the reputation they have or not and what makes them so reputable.

Reputation + Communication+ Traits' Analysis = Personal Branding?



Not quite. As a nation, us Greeks stereotypically possess all the above characteristics that can help us create and communicate our personal brands. However, what we need on top of these, are two other key "ingredients" in order to uncover and consistently communicate our brands: self-awareness and a systematic approach to career management.

Self-awareness will allow us to critically look at ourselves and dig up our uniqueness. It will allow us to cherish any positive feedback we receive from our networks. It will help us expand, grow, understand each other better.

Asystematic approach to "career care" (I believe a career is to be cared for, not just managed) will help us effectively sustain our personal brands. Up until a few years ago, very few professionals consistently and methodically cared for their careers.

Titanic effort was put in to set the wheels in motion and then most careers were left on auto pilot mode in terms of steering and destination. Hard work was put into keeping a career off the ground but there was no clear destination. As a result, not many people enjoyed the journey.

Understanding the importance of Vision and Purpose in steering our careers towards our chosen destination, becoming aware of our deep-rooted values and looking forward to travel through life, caring every day for a career that is close to our true call, are the missing pieces from our Greek Personal Branding jigsaw.

Most pieces are already there: respect for good reputation, communication and networking, supporting others in networks, analyzing, discussing, referring, working hard, they are all part of who we are.

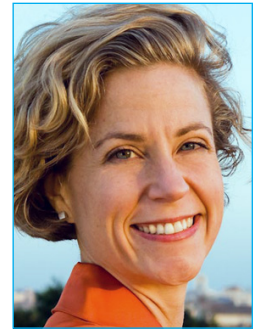
What is still missing is method, consistency and a good inner look at ourselves. It is really that simple and I am so lucky to be introducing Personal Branding to this country.





Building Your Personal Brand in Italy

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How a person builds and communicates their personal brand should be in part dictated by the cultural context in which they are living and working. Having spent seven years living in Italy and being its first certified personal branding strategist back in 2006, I'd like to share with you my insights into how to build a personal brand to support your career goals there.

La Bella Figura

The first thing to remember is that appearances are very important. It is what Italians call 'la bella figura'. Carrying and presenting yourself in an elegant and professional manner is of the utmost importance. The care you take in presenting yourself reflects the care you would take in doing good work and demonstrates you can handle yourself in social situations.

Paying attention to your appearance means both dressing in fashionable clothes and being aware of and respecting cultural customs and norms. To dress inappropriately or make social gaffes that indicate you do not understand Italian culture would be what the Italians call 'la brutta figura'. Such actions would likely lead to loss of respect from your clients or colleagues.

Communication

Another thing to be aware of is that verbal communication is preferable to written communication in many situations so the way you express yourself is important in being received well. When at a loss for conversation, you can always talk about how beautiful Italy is or how amazing their cuisine is as most Italians are incredibly proud of their country – particularly their food.

That said, non verbal communication in Italy can also be an art. Some suggest that there are so many hand gestures one can use to express themselves in Italy that you can have an entire conversation without saying a word. If you choose to use hand gestures in conversation – be sure you know what you are 'saying' before you 'say it'!



The Company You Keep

And lastly, although one's skills and experience do play a part, 'credibility' is usually established by the company you keep and your relationships to well-respected companies, institutions and groups. Most people prefer meeting people through an introduction, so your network is extremely important.

When people do not meet through an introduction, if a person has gone to a top university or worked for a well-known company, those credentials can help to build rapport. So when you are still in the early stages of building your network in Italy, you should also be looking at how to associate yourself as many well-respected groups and institutions as possible. But at the end of the day, introductions and developing the right relationships are the best way to establish trust and credibility that are essential to building a strong personal brand in Italy.

Barriers to Brand Building Online

Although personal branding as a concept is still a relatively new to Italy, there are several barriers that exist that may prevent people from embracing the idea of building their brand online.

According to a World Bank report, only 57% of Italians are internet users. This, coupled with the emphasis on verbal communication and personal relationships, is likely why Italians tend not focus as heavily as other cultures on developing their online identity and online network in order to build their personal brand or accelerate their careers. Since for Italians time is actually for spending with others, many would much prefer engaging with people rather than a computer.

Mobile Madness

Another item worth noting is that Italians are avid users of mobile phones, with per capita mobile phone users at 158 per 100 (meaning it is common for people to have more than one mobile phone). As more online engagement and networking is happening on mobile phones, this will likely contribute to an increase in the role of online visibility and networking in building one's personal brand.

What will the Future Hold?

For now, career prospects and personal brand building in Italy is most often driven by the culture of developing strong personal relationships 'offline' and a history of gerontocracy. As the very large older population passes and younger generations who are more digitally savvy mature, **it will be interesting to see how the role technology will change these cultural norms over time.**





Okay La! 5 Personal Branding Lessons from Singapore

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Spend a short amount of time in Singapore and it's easy to assume that Singaporeans don't place much emphasis on Personal Branding. But, that's not strictly true. It very much depends on how you define personal branding.

Talk to Singaporeans about "brand statements", "Reach assessments" and their "online brand" and you're likely to receive a limited response from some people.

But when you spend time living and working on this island state, you realize that Singaporeans (in their very own way) are actually very focused on managing their reputations.

Here are 5 personal branding lessons you can learn for Singapore:

1. Have a unique voice

Coming from London, one of the great advantages of moving to Singapore for me was the fact that everyone speaks English here.

Or rather – they speak "Singlish" – Singapore's very own version of English with some choice phrases and dialects thrown in.

Most notably – adding the word "La" to the end of an English sentence. "La" doesn't actually mean anything – it's just a way to make a sentence less formal and to be friendly. The Singaporean authorities try to distance them themselves from Singlish and encourage people to speak 'clear English.'

But having your own unique voice and style of communication (Singlish or otherwise) helps individuals, businesses Singaporean society to be unique – whilst maintaining their authenticity (i.e. the very essence of Personal Branding).

How about you?

Do your words, language and online profile reflect your authentic self? Or do you just sound like everyone else?

2. Watch your 'Face'

Singapore is a melting pot of different cultures and races – Chinese, Indians, Malays along with expatriate workers (like myself) making up the population. Around 75% of that population come from Chinese heritage. And as anyone who has done business in China will know, the concept of 'face' or "Mian Zi" (in Mandarin) is of fundamental importance to people with Chinese heritage.

In Chinese culture, 'face' represents an individual's reputation and standing in the eyes of others – be that in the workplace or society at large.

Chinese Singaporeans are consequently very mindful of the actions and activities which may cause them to 'lose face' in the eyes of others. Similarly 'gaining face' is equally important. Seeking opportunities and accolades which will enhance your reputation is seen as highly desirable.

How about you?

To what extent are you mindful and protective of your reputation? How proactive are you about seeking opportunities which will help you 'gain face'? Continued...





3. Practice excellence

As a visitor, the moment you arrive into Singapore, you recognize the high standards the country sets for itself. Singapore's Changi Airport has consistently been ranked the "Best Airport in the World" and really is a joy to travel through. But this focus on excellence doesn't apply just to the airport. The fabric of modern Singapore life is driven by achieving high standards – from the drive to achieve high grades at school and finding jobs in the most prestigious companies and professions, through to Singapore's obsession with the "tallest", the "biggest" and the "best." The "best health care system in Asia", the "largest Aquarium in the world", the "highest al fresco bar in the world", "the best street food in the world" The list goes on. Visitors to Singapore may smile at some of these 'accolades' – but at the same time, it's difficult not to admire the amazing success story of Singapore. A success that is driven by the focus on excellence and high standards in everything you do.

How about you?

The easiest way to be referred for a new job or be referred to new clients is to do an excellent job in your existing role and to impress your existing clients. What are you doing to practice excellence and set?

4. Be consistent

Singapore is driven by efficient systematic processes. Things 'just works' here. Be that transport systems, communication systems or the businesses built around robust processes – which then help deliver consistent results and experiences.

How about you?

The process of managing your brand is not a 'one off activity' when job searching or rebranding your business. It's the consistent set of actions and messages you send out. How can you become more systematic in the way you manage your personal brand?

5. Speak up

Historically, Singaporeans have not always been known for speaking up. Singapore's success in recent times has been built on the adherence to systems and rules. Which have then translated into the systematic and process-driven environments mentioned above. So "speaking up" is not a natural Singaporean trait.

Work inside a multi-national company in Singapore, and you'll often see western expatriates (rather than the Singaporeans) to be the more assertive ones. The ones that challenge and question the status quo. Talk to a Singaporean doctor, banker or management consultant and you'll often see a hidden artist, designer or entrepreneur who couldn't challenge their parent's desire for them to follow a traditional career path to a prestigious and well paid profession. But things are changing. I'm increasingly noticing the rise of the Singaporean voice. People willing to challenge the status quo, to have an opinion and speak their mind. People willing to follow the passions rather than simply choosing careers down the beaten path.

How about you?

In the past – fitting in, complying and not 'rocking the boat' was the path to career success. In today's workplace it's the worst thing you can do. Are you speaking up and standing out – or are you still keeping your head down and fitting in?

The Future

As the economies of Asia expand, Singapore will continue to be a vibrant, modern economic success at the heart of Asia's future growth. And will continue to attract talent and businesses who seek to benefit from that growth. The challenge for the people of Singapore is to maintain their authenticity, their history and uniqueness as they compete for business and career opportunities in an increasingly competitive market. In that respect, Singapore is no different to any of the other countries discussed in this Blogathon series.

In an increasingly noisy and competitive world, YOU and your personal brand are the biggest lever in your future success. ***So review these 5 lessons and decide which ONE area you need to focus on next to strengthen your brand and stand out....La!***





Jante's Law: The Enemy of Personal Branding in Sweden

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The other day, I performed a Google search on personal branding in Sweden. I didn't find much. And what I found was mostly articles written by non-specialists in the field, giving an overview of the concept. Basically a scratch on the surface. They mostly wrote stuff like "personal branding is strengthening the corporate culture by profiling the human capital..."

Boring, bland, dull explanations. No one seemed as passionate about it or understood it well enough to actually be a thought leader in the field. And, hit me if I'm wrong, the few who claimed to be the experts in the field appeared to have rather narrow or shallow views of what personal branding really is.

The threat within the culture

To me, true personal branding is to find your genuine voice, your authentic self and to communicate your personality in a way that visualize how you differ from other individuals in your field of expertise. Personal branding is something that makes you stand out, tells others that you are a person to go to and shows a potential employer how you could add value both to the team and work tasks.

One explanation for the absence of a true Swedish personal branding paradigm is that in Scandinavia, and particularly in Sweden, we have a culture of what's called **Jante's law** (originally formulated in a book by Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose).

Basically it says **"don't think you're better than anyone else."** This un-written law is very deeply rooted in organizations, among friends and families and in the overall society. I see Jante's law as the number one enemy of development in the personal branding field in Sweden.

Poor practice of recognition

In my country, people sit and wait for managers and peers to recognize them. Some of us wait a lifetime for a well-deserved recognition that never comes our way. We don't wave our hand and say "Hey, I'm good at this!" Why? Because we're not raised that way. Individual success is often seen as inappropriate and those who stand out is often criticized and discouraged. And because we're not raised that way, we're not taught to praise others either. It's a vicious circle.

Among the Aboriginal Australians, I've heard that when a person experiences that they've come to a higher level or understanding of a skill, they host a party to celebrate what they've achieved. It's not their superiors' responsibility to monitor and judge when someone has evolved, it's all up to the individual.

This is the opposite of Jante, and when you think of it, it is a very healthy outlook on the self. We can all take something to heart from this. No one better than yourself know when you have taken another leap in your personal development. Why sit and wait for others to notice? Just tell them what wonderful new skills you have learned!

Continued...





Confusing career possibilities within organizations

Another obstacle against personal branding in Sweden is the common use of flat organizations. Middle management exist more seldom in Sweden than in for example Finland, our eastern neighbor. It leaves less room for professional advancement within a company, even if it has positive side effects as well. Just as Runa Magnúsdóttir points out about Icelanders in her blogathon post, Swedish people are also very informal, even in corporate life, and feel relatively free to speak their mind to people at all levels in a company.

On the other hand, Swedish professional titles are puzzling. Many times, it's very difficult to know what experience a person has or what level they're working on when looking at their title or absence of it.

Take myself as an example. On my corporate business card, it says "Anna Rydne, Internal Communication". No level is specified. I have worked within communications for 12 years, and people I know in corresponding positions in other countries have titles like "Internal Communications Manager", "Senior Communications Professional" or "Communications Business Partner". Titles that tells something about who they are and what responsibilities they have. But I'm Swedish, so I am my department. I am "internal communication".

Confusing? Hell yeah! But Jante's law puts it in context: **don't think you're special or more important than others.**

Foreign influences lay foundation for a Swedish personal branding discipline

As always, where there's a strong tradition or un-written law, there's also a counter movement. This applies for personal branding in Sweden too. Younger people are much more confident about the superiority of their uniqueness than earlier generations.

And as the social media revolution continues to expand, influences from other countries, especially the U.S., also become obvious. It benefits the Swedish personal branding progress: the more outgoing nature of other cultures can only influence the formerly shy Swedes in a positive way.





Taking Back Control: Personal Branding in the Philippines

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I am a multicultural third culture kid, having been born in the Philippines and raised in the United States for 22+ years, well past college and my early career. Since then, I've been living 3 years in the Philippines to build up my online design business and I've learned a thing or two about personal branding since reading "Purple Cow" by Seth Godin for college. Much less, in the lens of a different culture. My general perception of personal branding in the Philippines is that it's not very well received in the mainstream. Many people still have worker drone mentality, and don't really take the effort to establish their own brand.

Challenges

Philippine culture is very community and family oriented. You're expected to stick within the unit and contribute for the overall good of the family. It's your "duty". Some might even think of having children as an "investment" in their later years; why have retirement when your family (children) can take care of you? This attitude, coupled by the rote learning system which is prevalent in their education, adds up to a group of people who simply don't think about how to stand out. Instead, they are being encouraged to stay within the family, and thus wouldn't have any reason to have a "personal brand" because they are taken care of.

"As long as they have a stable source of income, it's ok," Robbie, a freelance illustrator, designer, and blogger noted.

Having a rich social life and family is more important than building a career and personal branding hasn't caught on. As a people, Filipinos are very good at copying others. Tons of cover bands without original music, TV shows based on popular reality shows in the US, and other pop culture make it clear that for as much natural creativity that Filipinos possess, they use their efforts towards copying others rather than original or ethnically cultural ideas.

Another major challenge is the infamous "crab mentality" of Filipinos. Out of jealousy or insecurity, success is often looked down upon as being elite and snobbish. Rather than helping each other as a whole, Filipinos will often tear each other down, which leads to their inevitable demise and keeps them stuck in victimized thinking rather than solutions-based thinking.



Historical Roots

When Ferdinand Magellan crossed the Philippines in 1521 in the hopes of conquest, he was faced with his untimely death under the hands and sword of Lapu-Lapu, Philippines' first national hero. Many have said his technique was the first form of Arnis, or a weapon-based Filipino Martial Arts. Yet today, Filipino Martial Arts in the Philippines is often considered a "poor man's" art. Lapu-Lapu is branded as a National Hero and warrior, and yet his very own techniques are lost in the hustle and bustle of the Philippines trying to be westernized. While Filipino Martial Arts thrives in the West, and is even one of the top choice choreographers for Hollywood action films (most notably in the Bourne Trilogy, and Book of Eli), and training for the U.S. Army and Russian special forces, it is still bottom rung to the more popularized Tae Kwon Do and karate in the Philippines itself.

The disregard for ones own culture and hypocritical pride yet self-disempowerment suggests a culture that is lost and confused for its own identity. Personal branding is a way out of this quagmire; a way to take back control.

Solutions

It is entirely possible for the Philippines to remain a community oriented society and still embrace individualized personal branding. My belief is that it will only help family, community and country ten-fold because of the vast earning potential when embracing personal branding rather than being limited to a low paying monthly salary. Personal branding helps you become an expert in your chosen field or interest. All is not lost. Younger generations who are more tech savvy are starting to catch on. Filipinos should embrace the 21st century in order to empower themselves. Pinoy travel blogging are noted arenas where personal branding has excelled. Take Journeying James or We Are Sole Sisters, both popular Pinoy travel bloggers who have leveraged their personalities and travel experiences into a successful brand that has garnered local media attention, and entrepreneurial ventures.

Or other travel tourism enthusiasts like Raf Dionisio who co-built Circle Hostel, a low-budget surfer's destination to promote local eco-tourism and provide jobs for the local community. Raf's passion for his Filipino roots shows in the type of community he has helped build at the Circle Hostel, whose tagline is "There are No Strangers". His personal brand as a surf and travel enthusiast has helped him to connect with other like-minded people who eventually lead him to co-found Circle Hostel and other adventurous pursuits.

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