

Building Your Personal Brand By Darren Hardy



Describe yourself in one word.

What's the word?

What one word do others use to describe you?

(Don't know? Ask a few people.)

Is it the same word?

That word is your reputation, your personal brand.

Is that the brand you want and need to accomplish your goals in your marketplace?

If not, that could be what's holding you back.

The world is changing all around us (noticed yet?). The 40-year job security is a laughable memory. Pension? Social security? Hilarious!

No, in this day and age YOU have to create your own security.

In this whirlwind of change the only thing that is constant and your greatest asset, no matter what the future holds, is your personal brand. It is your only security for your future.

It's time we build your brand—the one you want and need for your greater future.

First off, let me dispel what you might think a personal brand is. It is not your business card, brochure, website or magnetic car signs.

Your personal brand is the powerful, clear, positive idea that comes to mind whenever other people think of you. It's what you stand for—the values, abilities and actions that others associate with you. Your personal brand tells your audience: Who you are, What you do and What makes you different or How you create value for your target market.

Look, here's the deal... know it or not, like it or not, **YOU are a brand.**

And you have been shaping your brand since you first started walking and talking.

Every day, through every communication and interaction you have, every room you walk into, every hand you shake, every picture you post, blog you publish, comment you make, tweet, 'Like' or Facebook posting you make, you are sculpting your brand. These many thousands of chisel marks ultimately shape the statue that is your personal brand.

So the question becomes, How does your statue look to date? Is it as magnificent as Michelangelo's *David* or might you need to improve your sculpting skills, just a bit?

Over the next couple posts I'll outline a 5-point Game Plan to help you select, develop, package, distribute and reinforce your new, beautiful and compelling brand.

5-Point Personal Brand-Building Game Plan

ONE—Pick Your Word

Select your brand. Forcing it into a single word causes you to become crystal clear, thus making it clear how to live up to your word and for others to understand you, in a single word.

Example: What word would you use to describe me and my brand?

My hope is you quickly picked the word “success.” Not because of the title on my business card or the masthead of our magazine, but because I personify, live up to, deliver on that word, every day in every conversation. The way I walk, talk, dress, show up, perform and deliver on every commitment I make. I am intentional about living up to and demonstrating that word in all that I do and all that I am. That’s my brand.

What’s your word? What’s your brand? Pick it now.

TWO—Develop Your Personal Brand Statement

This is WHO you are, WHAT you do and WHOM you service.

Get it down to a simple LinkedIn headline.

My previous LinkedIn headline was all over the board:

Entrepreneur, Private Equity Investor, Advisor, Bestselling Author, Keynote Speaker and Publisher of SUCCESS magazine.

Clear as mud, right?

Lots of WHO... but no WHAT or to WHOM.

Now it is simply:

Publisher, SUCCESS Magazine & Mentor to CEOs and High-Performance Entrepreneurs.

Ahhh, much better.

WHO, WHAT and to WHOM, all in 78 characters (vs 118).

Your turn.

Paste your new and improved LinkedIn headline into the comments below.

THREE—Package Your Brand

Every great brand is a narrative; it should be a compelling and awe-inspiring story. One that instructs and arouses, illustrates and illuminates.

Think of any great brand: Apple, Nike, Starbucks and Harley-Davidson.

They all have a story and it is through their story that we came to know them, connect with them and maybe fall in love with them.

What’s your story?

Craft it today.

Think about a few key stories that define who you are today. Write them down. These can be simple things that you remember from your childhood or entertaining stories from your adult life.

Having difficulties? I can relate.

Candidly, this step has always been difficult for me. I am so focused on the pursuit of my goals that I give very little acknowledgment (or memory) to my past. I’ve had to interview my family, friends and other people whom I have a shared history with to pull together stories to help with my teaching, audience connection and brand promotion. You might have to do the same.

Don’t like talking about yourself or storytelling? I can relate.

Two things you might be surprised to learn about me. I’m a pretty private person and I am not terribly comfortable (or interested in) talking about my life stories or myself, and in a private setting you will rarely hear me do so. I am always the one asking the questions and inducing someone else to talk.

In my public personal branding I had to get over this. I needed to be more personally vulnerable and revealing. I can tell you it has made a huge difference in being able to engage, connect and make an impact in other people’s lives... oh, and continue to bolster my personal brand.

So, even if you aren't comfortable with it, start doing it anyway. It will make a big contribution to your success and your connections with others.

FOUR—Distribute Your Brand

Anywhere and everywhere share the stories that make up your personal brand—who you are, what your passion is, what you do, what you stand for and who you serve and what makes you unique and distinctive.

Right now, go check your website, blog, Facebook page, Twitter page, LinkedIn page, YouTube channel—Do they all tell your brand story?

Your story should be featured on all your brochures and other marketing pieces.

Make sure you talk about your story in articles you write, speeches you give, and sales presentations you make.

As Jim Rohn would put it, “Talk about things that matter (value-driven brand stories) to people who care (your target market).”

FIVE—Reinforce Your Brand

This is the hardest part, as it is a 24/7/365 job. This means LIVING your brand.

Imagine yourself as a giant billboard constantly walking around and always visible. Everyone around you is looking at and reading your billboard. Based on what it says they are making decisions about your brand, constantly.

Because my brand word is “success,” I am compelled to bring excellence into everything I do. That's why I show up on time, prepared and ready to exceed expectations. That is why no matter the dress code of everyone else I am going to show up dressed for(?) You guessed it—SUCCESS!

Imagine if my brand is “success” and I show up unshaven, with ripped jeans, tattoos, an eyebrow piercing, tattered Chuck Taylors and a T-shirt.

Hey, I understand that IS the brand identity of some people and it serves their word—if their word is “renegade,” “artist,” computer “hacker” or “savant.”

But my word and brand is “success,” so I have to show up 24/7/365 personifying that brand.

Thus, my suggestion: **Be careful which word you pick**, as you will be challenged (24/7/365, with no vacations or holidays) to live up to it.

So as your last assignment, ask yourself:

Are you living up to your word, and your desired brand 24/7/365?

What adjustments, changes or improvements do you need to make to do so?

Follow these five steps and you will be an unstoppable force in this economy, and in any economy the future might bring.