

NO NONSENSE ADVICE

4



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NO NONSENSE ADVICE (4)

PERSONAL BRANDING

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COVER DESIGN BY ZAFRAN PACKEERALLY**

“If you are not a
BRAND you are a
COMMODITY”

Robert Kiosaki

A LITTLE INTRODUCTION, to how this book came about...

VN : Post out on FB : “No Nonsense Advice 3 : For First Time Managers - Thrilled to work with Anton and Tatum on my 7th book... ”

FF : comments : “You are on a roll !”

VN : “Yep ! Wanna join me for one ?”

FF : “Would love to !”

VN : “Text me your number : will call...”

FF : “Here we go...”

VN calls en route to his parents... FF agrees on the dates

FF meets VN. Has breakfast... Two hours later there is a framework. 10 hours later VN calls AT.

VN : Machang : we are almost done with the core chapters : I think you and T can help with one chapter ! Can you help ?

AT : Sure !!!

The rest, as they say, was history... 24 hours later, we had a completed book...

And if you are wondering : I have NEVER met Fahad, and knew him only through FB. I thought he could contribute towards this PURELY based on what I had as an impression of him based on his posts : and his videos. Two things I knew for sure : he was an ace at personal branding : and his English was impeccable : the only question I asked him was how fast he can type ! Fahad tells me over a cup of plain tea that the only reason he agreed to come all the way to Kandy and even remotely consider the possibility of co-authoring this book with me (in the somewhat absurdly ambitious target of within 24 hours) was based on his perceptions of me based on the posts I put : and the ‘synergies’ he felt we could create together.

Similarly : Anton and I met in my formative years as a Trainer : and we connected many years afterwards when he too became a freelance consultant PURELY based on the first impressions he had of me : and the willingness to 'throw his lot in with me' - which was heavily influenced by what he had heard of my way of working.

All three of us were 'willing to take the chance' with each other based on each other's perceptions : which to a large extent was formed by our social media presence : and the 'brands' we had created for ourselves...

Of course : the reason it worked : and we were able to do this piece of work seamlessly was down to the fact that were, God honestly genuine too... Who we portrayed out to be was almost purely who we fundamentally were : which made working together such a breeze...

So, if you genuinely think personal branding is not for you : think again... You don't need to look any further than this very book to prove to you it matters!

V

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“Logic will never change
emotion or perception”

Edward De Bono

Chapter 1

You say Hello, I say Hullo

We are ALL judgmental - that's just the way it is... See...

Ultimately, we HAVE to be judgmental: otherwise, we can't really EXIST. We HAVE to make quick judgement calls all the time : and our judgement calls on people are no different. In an instant we have 'sized up' a person : and the rest of our relationship with them is either a validation or a contraction to that first initial judgement we made. A few decades ago, this judgement was largely based on a personal meeting or interaction : or something we read on a newspaper. Today : it is mostly on social media. So, chances are, people who meet you for the 'first time' aren't really meeting you for the 'first time' and have 'met' you through social media, and have made judgements of you before you meet them : and of course : you have made YOUR judgements about them too !

Do's



- **Proactively understand how you are perceived**

Before you think of 'branding' yourself, understand how you are perceived first. This will enable you to understand what you need to do in order to position yourself in the way you want to be positioned. Seek to create a conscious framework around how others see you : in all your interactions : at work, at home, in society and of-course, in social media platforms.

- **Ask others for their opinion of you - start with people you know well enough**

Start with family and friends. What do others' like about you ? What don't they like ? What kind of a person do they think you are ? What do they think your competencies are ? What do they think you are about ? See reactions to your posts. Read through the comments you get. Try and build a frame of reference for you to get feedback : and see if what they actually see in you is in line with who you really are : and who you want to be portrayed as.

- **Take stock of whether you are ok with the perceptions others have of you**

Now that you know what others think of you : try and take stock of the 'gap' you need to fill. If what others' see in you is a polar opposite to who you really are : then you really have got your work cut out for you. However, this is rarely the case. Remember - we ALL have certain aspects of ourselves 'misinterpreted' by others - and this is fine as long as it does not interfere with who you want to be portrayed as. In-fact, sometimes, it actually maybe good to just let that perception be. Imagine you are a really nice guy : but your team has a perception that you really can get 'tough' when you want to be - you really don't want to change that perception now do you ?

Don'ts



- **Don't assume people are going to accurately judge who you are**
Perception is just that : perception. It doesn't need to be accurate. Infact, it almost always never is. So, don't assume people are going to 'get you' because you act in a certain way. Remember, many of those with whom you interact will have different personalities, different values and different outlooks to you : all of which will color their own perceptions. So, be ok that you will never quite be perceived in the same light as you would want painted...

- **Don't take negative perceptions personally**

Negative perceptions about you becoming the mainstream ? Don't take it personally. You are not alone in this ! Take a look at presidents : who get voted out simply based on perceptions (how many who vote someone in or out of the highest office in the country have actually met them ?) and take a look at many actors who are completely misunderstood simply because of the roles they play in a movie ! So, don't take negative perceptions to heart too much (let's discuss how we deal with it later)

- **Don't assume you can change perceptions overnight**

Changing perceptions often take a long time : and you need to be patient enough to consistently chip at it until the tide turns. A negative perception can be brought about because of just ONE incident : and at times, it never leaves you : and you are forever linked to it. However, you CAN change the overall perception : but it DOES take time : and there really isn't much of a short cut to it.

“ Perception is reality. If you are perceived to be something : you might as well be it : because that is the truth in people’s minds ”

Chapter 2

I see through my glasses : You see my frames

You have no choice : You are getting Branded anyway...

You would be naive to assume that personal branding is something that only someone aspiring to get into the corporate sector has to do. We not only live in an age where we have to live with the inherent judgmental nature of people but also the impression that our presence across all scopes of our visibility affects how we are perceived. All the little choices you make that you think are inconsequential are snowballing towards creating an image of you that other people are picking up on and creating an imprint in their minds of who they think you are, what they think you can do, what opportunities they think they can give and more importantly what opportunities you might not be suited for. So, if you are getting 'branded' anyway, doesn't it make sense for you to own it and take more control of it?

Do's



- **Aggressively take control of what you put out there**

With your personal brand as a presence you need to understand that being passive means that you are giving up ownership in terms of your brand. As with any successful brand, you will be required to create a campaign and aggressively market that campaign. It would mean that your actions and inactions are curated and crafted so that you are able to link something someone may say about you right back to an action you carried out that lead to their comments.

- **Understand that it's not only your face to face interactions that get you judged**

We're mostly used to the idea that making a face to face 'first impression' is the fundamental starting point for your personal brand. We then build on how we shake hands, how we might hand them our business card, how we dress and how we sit. While all of these points are extremely valid, you need to understand that as a person you don't just exist in person, you also exist online, you exist in other people's word of mouth, you exist in potential future projects etc. It's important that you comprehend this and think about how much focus you have put into each of those areas of possible judgement.

- **What may be inconsequential now may become inconsequential later : be mindful (this increases as your visibility increases)**

As much as we might like to say that our past is in the past or as much as we might like to wish it was stuck there, it would be foolish to assume that actions you have carried out in your past won't on (many) occasion(s) affect how you are perceived in the future even though you might not currently exhibit those behaviours. To put it into context, someone might steal something once, then feel guilty about and decide not to steal again. Imagine this person then gets caught for his crime 5 years later. He's correctly labeled as a thief and there's no escaping that. Even though our actions might not be as drastic as stealing, we need to understand that things we do now have a possibility of affecting the brand we are trying to build in the future and the probability of our detrimental actions popping up get's higher as our visibility in society/organisation increases. To put it shortly; the more famous you get, the more chances of skeletons being dragged out of your closet.

Don'ts



- **Don't assume that what doesn't matter to you doesn't matter to others**

Linking back to the point of what's not inconsequential now becoming consequential later, we should also not assume that what's insignificant to us is also insignificant to others. And these are mostly what we call the little things that we think others don't notice let alone consider important. At one end of the spectrum perhaps you think that the little courtesies like please and thank you are inconsequential because they don't mean much to you, but they might be that little icing on the cake that is required for someone to fully buy into the brand you are trying to pitch. On the other end of the spectrum there might be far more bigger gestures and behaviours you completely omit because you have failed to understand that it is indeed important to the people you work with, interact with and who's favour you need. There might be aspects of your personality or behaviour that you might display without thinking much of it, however in the context of what you're trying to achieve or impact within a certain audience or context, it would be prudent to be wise on if it's appropriate and also does it work towards serving the bigger picture.

- **Don't fake it**

Right off the bat let me tell you that 'Faking it till you make it' is a double edged sword. There are things you might benefit from faking; like confidence when you have to meet people or engage in a public speaking event. However when it comes to sustaining effort and control over your brand, you're far better off portraying aspects that are authentic to you. Mostly because faking it takes effort and if you do get called out and you are unable to defend your position, the consequences are going to take a lot of damage control.

- **Don't kid yourself into thinking 'I don't give a F@#K !'**

If you have read this book this far, I think it's safe to assume that you have a certain amount of interest taking some control in how other people perceive you. Let me be clear in saying that it's okay to really not give a F@#K about what people think about you, BUT if you are relying on other people to achieve things that will be important to you, there is a compromise you need to make. It's liberating to say; 'I will be myself you take it or leave it', and that is fine, but I see personal branding as a vehicle to get what you want.

In a sense it's a selfish game, a game of strategy and patience, where you are crafting your image in order to achieve the things that are important to you.

“Through the doors of
PERCEPTION : Down
the corridors of
UNCERTAINTY : Into
the room of SELF
DOUBT : Opens the
window of
OPPORTUNITY.”

David Parker

Chapter 3

They would : So I should

Understanding the Gaps in your own perceptions

Now that you are clear you NEED to start branding yourself, remember that there needs to be careful thought which needs to go into it. The starting point is actually you taking a cold hard look at yourself and understanding yourself without any illusions. Being able to accept yourself as you are : but also, understanding the aspirations you have offers a good gap analysis : which is what this chapter is all about.

Part 1: How you understand yourself

Do's



• Take proper stock of yourself

When you are taking stock of yourself, do so with your eyes and ears wide open.

- Do a personal SWOT for yourself
- Do a perceptual map for yourself
- Do a set of milestones for yourself
- Compare the milestones against your SWOT and ask yourself what elements you need to work on
- Compare the milestones against your perceptual map and ask what elements of your person you need to change to 'be the person you want to be in the future'

• Understand you are an evolving person

We are all evolving : all the time. The issue is that we are evolving unconsciously. So, become conscious of the evolution that is taking place in you. Similarly, remember others around you are also evolving : so the same relationship dynamics may not play out as time goes by. Be conscious about this : and try and understand how your context and others' context can be brought into an even keel - and be able to find common ground. For example, you are the 'party animal' and everyone waits for you to come to make sure the 'party' is 'happening.' Then you get married, have kids, and want to spend more time with the kids : and everyone talks about how much fun you 'were' rather than 'are' : because most of those you hung out with are still not married. All of a sudden your 'persona' has taken a complete U TURN. This is no one's fault : least of all yours : but DO be conscious it WILL happen : and that you may need to look at other avenues to still remain 'relevant' in your social group.

- **Who you are with different people will be different**

We are different with different people aren't we ? We love all our kids the same way : sure : but we DO treat them differently depending on their personalities and ages. Similarly, we respond to different people within our team differently : and there is nothing wrong with that until you make the horrible mistake of being misunderstood as playing 'favourites.' So, make sure you have a certain 'common ground' you approach all relationships and interactions with. Try and have common values you display when dealing with anyone. Allow everyone to understand the CORE of your persona : and let variations take place in their perceptions based on their interactions with you on all else.

Don'ts



- **Don't think that you are not important enough to do a self assessment**

Please don't think only CEOs, Actors/Actresses and Public Figures are the only people who need to take stock of their BRAND and actively work on it. No matter who you are, your personal Brand matters : and it sets you apart. So, make sure you take the time to do that self assessment for yourself.

- **Don't look at yourself through one lens only : look at yourself holistically**

When doing a self assessment, take a look at yourself in all angles : in all spheres of your personal and public life. Remember : you are you : and you are all of you. No point looking at 'branding' yourself as a great CEO and forgetting you are a father/mother and an integral part of society too. What you do in one space often (almost always) spills over to the other spaces.

- **Don't wait until a crisis to make the judgement about yourself**

We often wait until it becomes a real mess to do something with how we are perceived. Don't make that mistake. Take charge early : and ensure you start working on how others see you proactively rather than reactively.

Part 2: How that understanding translates to actions and how you act WITHOUT conscious thought as well

Do's



- **Accept that EVERYTHING you do is being judged**

ABSOLUTELY everything you do is being judged. The way you talk, the way you walk, what you post, how you post it, how often you post it, who you hang out with, who you don't hang out with, what you like, what you don't like, your relationship with your wife and kids : ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING is being judged. Of course how severely you are judged is often based on how 'important' a person you are ! So, remember : you are being watched and judged everywhere...

- **Accept that actions always speak louder than words'**

What you put out on a post on social media is one thing : how you BEHAVE everyday is another. Remember : actions always speak louder than words : and what augments a 'BRAND' is congruence and synergy between the two. An environmental activist are you ? Start by cycling to work : or at least, taking public transport ! Inconvenient ? Hell yes : but... then again, it is you who wanted to talk about the environment in the first place yes ?

- **Accept that being consistent is the key**

One little project you do to 'help children in need' is not going to make you a philanthropist: nor picking up a dog from the street and giving it a home make you an animal welfare activist. You need to do things consistently : and the key is this : you need to do it EVEN IF IT IS INCONVENIENT to you : because that's what you are professing to be. Remember : its about every day things : never that one BIG thing that BRANDS get built by... Sure, that ONE, well placed post or public activity gets you noticed : but its not enough to really do much when it comes to building a persona about you around that particular aspect.

Consistency : there really is no substitute to it.

Don'ts



- **Don't always be governed by what others think**

Sure, we have been talking to you so much about how important it is to take a look at Branding yourself from the perspective of 'others' : but this is to ensure you understand that your Brand is built around what others perceive of you. Don't misunderstand this to mean that you need to be GOVERNED by what others say : nor that you should weigh everything you say and do based on what you think others will think/do. There IS a subtle : yet important distinction here. If you feel it is right : if you feel it will do good : if you think you 'own' the solution : go with it. What we ARE saying is that you need to be 'conscious' that whatever you do will have perceptions being built around it : but NEVER be strangled by this that you don't do what you truly believe in.

- **Don't wait : proactively seek opportunities to 'demonstrate' your capabilities**

Don't wait for the 'perfect moment' : make the effort to find opportunities to showcase your work as you go along. There is almost never a perfect moment : what matters is that whatever you showcase needs to be to the right audience. Sometimes a 5 minute video of a little snippet of information can go viral, and a 15 minute beautifully shot and edited video may go unnoticed. Sometimes a tiny post gets tons of commentary when a well researched paper never gets the same mileage. Its almost impossible to predict how these things play out : but, if you put yourself 'out there' consistently enough, the chances of you getting picked up is certainly much much higher !

- **Don't ever do something purely out of spite publicly**

One golden rule to remember is to NEVER have a public showdown simply because your ego was dented or because you wanted to get even. Your brand often interacts with other 'brands' - and it is uncommon to see 'egos' clash. Steer well clear of these egotistical battles. It never serves anyone well - unless of course you are in politics - and even in politics there are better things to do than traditional mud slinging. If you want to pick battles - do so privately - never publicly.

Part 3. How that action is perceived by others and thereby how your Brand gets built anyway

Do's



- **No matter how well you choreograph it : people may perceive it in a way you didn't want**

Remember : you are in control only of the messages you send out - and no matter how well you may have thought it through - it can, and will be misinterpreted. Communication is NOT an exact science : it is more an art form.

So, think through different angles before you craft your messages and your interventions.

- **Understand that other's perceptions can be and will be influenced**

You are not the only one Branding : others are too : and there are significant influencers in any area of expertise/industry/arena. So, remember that the things you 'put out there' will be scrutinized by others who are influenced and weighed upon by them.

So, it is in your best interest to have a solid set of influencers who will endorse you first : and ensure that they weigh in when required.

- **Actively work on engaging others - into creating the perceptions you want**

Start making friends from varying backgrounds and walks of life. Engage others that 'matter' in meaningful conversations, and get their points of view before you start 'marketing' yourself and your ideas.

Remember that Brands are built through association as much as action.

Don'ts



- **Don't be backward in 'countering' misconceptions**

See some wrong perception being created about you ? Take charge : and take action. Be polite : be civil : be courteous and attack the POINT rather than the person. Don't be scared to take action : and take decisive action. It's important to set the record straight !

- **Don't always react either - sometimes doing nothing is also ok**

Though we advised you to take 'decisive action' remember that some things are not worth it. If the 'accusations' or the 'stories' about you are trivial : and is not really making a dent in the public perception about you - let it be.

Knowing when to go on the offensive and when to just let it be is something you need to really come to grips with - and perfect over time - there really isn't a rule book here...

- **Don't slack off when things are going right**

Things are going superlatively well ? Everyone seems to really like you ? Everyone taking you really seriously ? You are gaining momentum ?

Now is not the time to slack off... Capitalize : and make your brand really make its mark. Whatever you are doing seems to be working : so keep doing it : but also, this is a great time to innovate and experiment : because the 'mistakes' you make will not be as detrimental as when you are NOT on a high. So, take the time to experiment when you are riding that wave !

“ Brand is just perception :
and perception will match
reality over time ”

Elon Musk

Chapter 4

I am Selling : You are not Sold

Within the context of a personal brand you need to understand the value of actual behaviour. We tend to want to float out a little bit of effort in terms of image or action and then expect a return in terms of how we are perceived.

Consider cricket; as a bowler taking five wickets in a match is an admirable feat. Taking five wickets across 3 matches is even more admirable, but if the rest of your career is littered with mediocre 1 or 2 wicket performances the overall perception of who you are as a bowler would be one of an average performer. However, in order to be perceived as an above average performer you would not only need to consistently take a higher number of wickets but also give away as least runs as possible while at the same time contribute to field placement etc. You need to understand that these displays of competency have to be consistent, consciously exhibited and in line with how you wish to be portrayed.

Do's



- **First and foremost : Understand what you are 'selling'**

As an individual you might be competent across several areas. This is great but it doesn't help when other people can't exactly pin point a couple of key things that they would reach out to you for.

Look at it in terms of a super market; you might be able to buy meat and vegetable and groceries all in one place, but if you wanted the freshest meat you would probably go to a butcher who specifically sells fresh meat, the same way you might head to a farmers market for the freshest vegetables. People need to know what you are offering and you can't expect them to just know it if you don't put the effort behind making them know.

- **Make a mind map of the 'persona' you want to build and go into detail**

Your personal brand isn't a one off interaction. It is in an entire persona and to an extent a lifestyle that you would like to portray in public. You need to understand that this persona has aspects, each aspect has behaviours that go with it. It's these behaviours that people relate to and pick up on when they are forming an impression of you. Added to the behaviours this persona also has certain visual and auditory traits in terms of how it looks and sounds. It might seem tedious but if you consider yourself as a human being are you not made of all the aspects of how you think, look and speak? Shouldn't the brand you portray also encompass all these aspects of your entire person?

- **Do make it authentic to you : never compare it to others**

It can be very tempting to see the final output of a personality you see being portrayed publicly, seeing how other people relate to that personality and want to replicate the traits of that personality. However as we know we are only seeing a fraction of that iceberg above the water, there is whole lot of thought and substance beneath the surface and that is sustaining that personality. The same way for you, you need to figure out what are the competencies and personality traits that are authentic to you that come about organically. The sustainability of the brand you are going to portray heavily depends on how authentic it is. It's easier to show the world who you really are rather than try and create traits you think people like to see and flailing when it comes to finding ways to portray them.

- **Link the identity you are trying to create to your larger purpose (in life)**

A brand is something that needs to be lived, it's not something you sometimes use when you need people to see you a certain way.

Your brand identity has to be visible in interaction you display publicly. There might be private parts of your personality that you choose to keep private and that is fine, but the aspects you do choose to live out publicly need to be consistent. It helps if this identity is linked to a larger purpose or lifestyle and once again it doesn't have to be a 'fake purpose'. Ask yourself these 2 questions: what are the things I value and what are the type of things I believe in. In crafting your identity then ask if these values and beliefs are consistent with the actions you are portraying.

- **Find that one or two things that makes you a cut above others**

Competencies are skills that have benchmarks. As an example you might be skilled enough to ride a bicycle, but are you competent enough to ride at the tour de France.

You might be skilled enough to play a sport but does your competency make you suited to play at club level or national level. The same way, the skills and behaviours that you believe you are competent at need to be identifiable and displayed at a level that is noticeably a cut above everyone else playing in that field. Obviously it isn't easy to market yourself in a dense field of similar people offering similar value additions that you do, but this can change if you enhance your value proposition with one or two things that you notably do better than them.

- **Be relatable and be grounded**

All of these aspects we have talked about might seem like you need to carve out a personality that is unrealistic and out of reach.

One important aspect to remember is that whatever personal brand you decide to portray it will be received or rejected by human beings. Human beings are emotions and you need to be able to connect with emotions. The overarching rule with anything is that the character you are has to be one that is relatable and grounded in reality. This aspect is fundamental in that your target audience will always need to be front and center of your focus in terms of how they relate and perceive the aspects you decide to market to them.

- **Be empathetic to other's situations : and how it colors their perceptions of you**

Linking with the previous point of human beings being emotional creatures in varying degrees you need to understand that regardless of you having carefully orchestrated all parts of your personality that you wish to portray, there is always a chance that an off day on the part of your target audience could negatively colour their perception of you. Perhaps they're having a bad day, issues at home, or their pet died. All of these might not result in an ideal response to you or your persona; be empathetic and try and discover better timing and remember that if you're consistent in what you stand for and portray, the one or two off days won't really matter.

Don'ts



- **Don't piggy back on someone else's brand**

When you're in the formative stages of crafting your personal brand it might be tempting to associate yourself with people who are currently successfully thriving off their own version of a successful personal brand. Sometimes these other personalities might be similar or complementary to the brand you're trying to portray, and you might think that you will benefit from the association. One important thing to understand is there is a very strong possibility that your brand might not receive the expected outcome from piggy backing on a brand that is already established. Human beings are far more complex than the products or services that can be packaged or bundled together and while it might appear to take longer to independently build your image, I can assure you that the output of what you create will be stronger if it is built and can stand up on its own merit rather than someone else offering you a life line. This doesn't mean you shouldn't learn from their insights or ask for advice, but take all of that and forge your own unique positioning.

- **Don't try too hard - it helps if it comes 'naturally'**

In terms of figuring out what competencies of ours we can market it might seem daunting, the lives we usually lead might seem somewhat uninteresting and unworthy of marketing compared to the things we see out in the world. You need to understand that what we usually see on very public spaces like social media, are the result of accentuating day to day mundane things and making it look extra glamorous. Of course there are the odd few people whose everyday seems like a vacation but you need to ask yourself what am I trying to achieve with my personal brand, what are the things I am doing now that will benefit this outcome, how can I 'market' these aspects to my benefit.

- **Don't over reach let your perception evolve**

Understand that your personal brand creation is a journey both in the sense of how it takes time to build and what it will look like at each stage of its development. Rome wasn't built in a day, but the builders did have an end output in mind when they started building it. The same way, while you need to have an aspirational standard of what your personal brand is going to look like, you also need a practical understanding of what it will look like at each stage of its development. Only aspire to fulfill the best version of what it should be at each of these stages. Premature over reaching might result in it seeming artificial and forced. For an example if you want to be perceived as a travel blogger, and travelling the world doesn't make economic sense right now, you need to understand that you can perhaps market your local trips to the best of your ability until your economic situation allows you to scale up.

- **Don't be blindsided that aspects you are NOT pushing the agenda might be getting picked up on more than the ones you DO**

This is the eternal problem of any brand. No matter how carefully you plan and curate how you want to be perceived there is the possibility that the aspect you didn't consider important enough would be the one thing that gets picked up on. You see we can accentuate certain traits and try and market them in order to get them noticed, but remember there are other traits and behaviours and idiosyncrasies we display that might seem minor or inconsequential to us but might completely be counter-productive to the brand we are trying to portray. Consider yourself as a whole and ask yourself is there anything that I am doing, saying, posting that might be to the detriment of my brand. Don't stop by just asking yourself, ask your closest friends and if you have the luxury, maybe some very close and trusted clients or colleagues.

- **Don't assume you are ever 'offline'**

Living your brand is not a 'part time' gig. It isn't something you are able to only do when you THINK other people are watching. It definitely isn't something you should put on when you want people to see you a certain way. A lot of the time we are being judged and positioned when we are unaware, in those passive moments where we think we are 'offline'. This tracks back to the point of being authentic and linking it to your life purpose, because then you don't need to pretend and even if you think you're offline, you probably won't be doing anything that's too contradictory to what you would portray if you were 'online'.

- **Don't shy away from owning mistakes**

Taking control means you take ownership and responsibility for ALL of you. These things include the occasional cock up you might make in terms of how you position yourself. We are so used to covering mistakes up and hoping that others don't see and being ashamed of them. Remember people connect with people who are relatable and grounded. You made a mistake? Okay, everyone makes mistakes. Can you own your mistake and apologise and amend your behaviours? If you can then that would be a defining feature because not a lot of people can do that. That being said if you are consistently making mistakes and are assuming that it will all be okay if I just keep saying sorry, you will have to think again. Mistakes can occur but taking ownership and corrective action ensures they don't become the norm.

- **Don't expect everyone to love you - you are bound to have detractors (but they don't have to 'hate' you either)**

We assume that people's perceptions of us are either negative or positive. While it's true that these two positions exist, we also need to understand that there is a third position of people who might be neutral about you. Just because someone isn't talking about how great you are or isn't willing to yell out public testimonials about you doesn't mean that they sit at the opposite end of the spectrum. It means that they might be just neutral and that is okay too. The fact of the matter is with 7 Billion people in the world you are inevitably going to have people who see you in a multitude of ways. Usually you're better off engaging with people who like you and ignoring the neutrals and detractors, however if one of them is a critical personality that can contribute to your growth it might be worth your while investing time and effort in converting them, but do it with finesse.

“ A Brand is a PROMISE.
A good Brand is a
PROMISE KEPT ”

Muhtar Kent

Chapter 5

Bragging Rights : Bragging Right

One of the BIGGEST problems most people have is in thinking that good work alone is enough to be 'branded' as a top performer. We cannot emphasize the importance of 'marketing yourself' enough. Each of your bosses will have multiple people reporting to them. Each of your Clients will have multiple resource persons they are working with other than you. What makes YOU stick out ? See : data is not the ONLY contributor towards making decisions - never underestimate the importance of 'emotion' in a decision making process. Ultimately, people must see you not only as competent in what you do : but also, as someone they 'like' and 'resonate with' : that all important second element will make all the difference in the world when you are competing with an equally competent person (or indeed a more competent person)

Earn the RIGHT to brag first : then BRAG RIGHT !

Do's



- **Build your competencies as much as your Brand**

See, before anything else, you must have something to brag about. So, start working on your competencies and work hard at it. Don't cut corners here - nor take short cuts. Be DAMN good at it. Be the BEST you can possibly be at it. Remember : your performance : in whatever you undertake - must also be consistent. Consistent good performance is something few can boast about : so, commit to that as much as building a brand for yourself.

- **Be DAMN good at one thing : and be known for it**

Don't cast the net too wide. Initially focus on just ONE thing you will perfect. Be selective because your time is limited : and trying to do too many things all at the same time is generally a sure way of being 'distracted (unless of course you are super super super smart and talented !) FOCUS on what you are REALLY good at : and stick to it until you are DAMN good at it.

Then, showcase just one or two of your critical achievements : publicly : and get others to talk about it on your behalf. Play this card subtly : but, it IS critical that people 'talk about' how good you are !

- **Try and be 'somewhat good' at a few other things : don't niche yourself too narrow**

Once you have gotten 'noticed' for one thing, broaden that same level of 'competence' to a few other peripheral things. Good at organizing events ? then, may be try your hand at decor or photography too ? Try and ensure the areas are related : so that people see you as having complimentary skills - which augments your brand. If you have different skill sets, try ways of combining them.

For example, if you are good with graphics and also good at explaining things, try and do a 'masterclass' on graphic design whilst remaining as a Graphic Designer as your core.

NEVER niche yourself too narrowly. Our world is evolving and being disrupted at multiple levels. So, some of the most sought after jobs and careers and gigs might well be not so lucrative in years to come. So, whilst becoming 'known' for something specific, broaden that scope a little as well.

- **Make sure you ADD VALUE to your stakeholders - what will they miss if YOU were not there**

Ultimately it boils down to just one thing : do you really add value to your stakeholders or not. No matter how good you maybe at something, unless you really add value, the chances of you being 'useful' is low : and unless you are 'useful', it is only a matter of time until you are replaced. Adding Value is NOT the same as DOING A GREAT JOB. Remember to ask yourself what your STAKEHOLDERS REALLY EXPECT from you. Ultimately it is your stakeholder who decides whether or not you have added value : so, always always, take a look at this from their perspective.

- **Continuously enhance your value proposition**

Our needs change all the time : and your stakeholders will have changing and evolving needs too. Take stock and understand how you can enhance your value proposition. The easiest way to enhance your value proposition is in asking your stakeholders one simple question :

“How else can I help you ?”

- **Create something that others will look forward to**

Try hard to find something unique to offer. Maybe it is the WAY you do it : rather than WHAT you do. Think hard about creating your own style. Maybe it is something as simple as ensuring you are absolutely responsive : and reply a mail within an hour : or it is the way you simply make people laugh : or that you are thorough - and your boss has to NEVER check the work you do. Whatever it maybe, make it something your recipients/stakeholders look forward to.

- **Have finesse - unless that is not how you want to be perceived**

Branding yourself doesn't always have to be about being 'in your face' : be classy : have finesse. However, if what you are doing REQUIRES you to be really OUT THERE (like the Kadashians) then its fine : go right ahead ! However, MAKE that conscious choice first !

- **Make sure you are not the ONLY one 'bragging' about you**

Don't become the monkey that praises its own tail. Find people who love your work : love who you are : and actively seek their help in positioning you in the right places : and get them to talk about you ! Maybe it's a boss who is thrilled to have you on board : a Client who benefited greatly from your inputs : a friend who sought your help : it doesn't really matter : actively encourage engagement from your stakeholders in telling your story. The more people who matter that speak of you - the better.

Don'ts



- **Don't assume the good work you do is getting 'picked up'**

Good work is not always picked up by those that matter. Silently working hard and 'hoping' it is appreciated is rather naive. For starters, you are not the ONLY one doing good work. Then, you have to understand that there is limited time for those in charge to really understand what is going on : and they are selective about the areas of focus they have. Finally, you have to understand that what you think is a good job may not be exactly what they are looking for in the first place.

Being able to position the work you do matter. It doesn't have to be overtly done. Consider making use of a meeting to talk about some of the new activities being done and the results its creating to help another department. Look at sharing a best practice from a different industry that might help a client in a completely different industry. These are all ways in which you can showcase your work without the obvious 'hey look at me : I am doing a fantastic job' approach that we are so used to taking.

The critical thing is this : understand that YOU have to take onus of marketing YOURSELF.

- **Don't allow failures to define you : work on ensuring your brand can withstand the inevitable 'F*\$K up'**

You really can't go through your career (in whichever field) without a few major cockups. Failures are normal : but don't shrug your shoulders and think nothing of it either. Make failures great learning opportunities : and equally importantly, avenues to learn how to manage negative publicity about you. NEVER allow a failure to define you. What you have to do is to ensure you capitalize on your good work : and make the failure an opportunity to take a cold hard look at where you need to improve on : and when you take that turn : market that too. Comeback stories are always great motivators !

- **Don't shy away from owning up to being 'human'**

Don't go out of your way to brag about yourself where you portray a 'perfect' picture about yourself. NONE of us are perfect : and trying to portray yourself as such makes you come across as pompous and arrogant : and full of yourself : and no one really likes a pompous, arrogant 'prick' ! Own up to your mistakes. Be able to laugh at yourself (publicly) : and be someone others see as 'real' !

Also, remember, all of us have off days. No one can be consistently brilliant. You WILL have that off beat : that flat chord : that blatant mistake in the numbers : that bad word that slipped out when talking in public : that obvious mistake that everyone spotted except you ! Don't worry about it. Accept you made a mistake, apologize, and move on. A public apology does NOT mean your brand value devalues : it often augments it. However, if you ARE making a public apology remember it needs to be sincere - and honest - and you must ensure you commit to the corrective actions you spoke about.

- **You don't have to be loud to be heard**

Be careful in how you actually look at brand yourself. Don't follow the heard and try to put anything and everything out there. Be selective. Be subtle. Position the messages carefully. Think through the perceptions you are building. NEVER think more is actually better : it is often counterproductive.

You really don't have to be loud to be heard : you just need to have something worth listening to !

**“ Your personal Brand is
what people say about you
when you are not
in the room ”**

Chris Ducker

Chapter 6

Your Signature : My Autograph

We are always selling something, whether it's a product, service or an image. Your 'PRESENCE' becomes your product at this point. Therefore you need to learn the art of positioning your BRAND. Granted this cannot be achieved overnight. This is a continuous process, which you will learn to adapt when interacting with clients and customers.

Everything about you now becomes a focus point: your appearance, your words, your attitude, your reactions to situations.

Best part is that you may not realize how you are negatively positioning yourself by your actions.

The better you strategize in positioning yourself, the better your chances of being seen and heard.

Worried? Well...let's look at some basics, which you can start immediately and then build on...

Dress Code

Do's



- **Pay heed to where you are - but be authentic to yourself too (if you want to)**

What you wear to an occasion will state a lot about you. The trick is knowing 'what to wear', and 'where to wear' it to!!! That is if you don't want to end up sticking out like a sore thumb!

Be sensitive and learn to discern what is the best attire for the occasion. Things to consider are the type of event; formal or casual, location; outdoors or indoors, expected line up of guests; conservative or radical, to mention just a few. There is a time and place for everything. If in doubt – Ask for the dress code!

Sure, style is our own and yes, we enjoy making heads turn, but ensure it's for all the right reasons, and NEVR for emitting an awkward pungence or looking like an exotic paradise bird on a bad wardrobe day!

Avoid fashion faux pas, wardrobe malfunctions, and bad hair days! Sounds like a tall order? Not to sugar coat it - but IT IS! Especially at work and where it is better to err on the side of conservative-formal, specially, if you are a manager, a role model everyone looks up to and will someday emulate!

• Take care of personal hygiene

For those of you who need 'clarity' on what personal hygiene is: it's the fundamentals of looking after YOUR body! The basics of which are cleaning yourself, so others can bear to be around you!

This includes all the nooks, crannies, and orifices of the human anatomy. It's essential a good routine is developed, because no one wants to fondly be referred to as "Smelly" the 8th dwarf or be avoided because you are a 'festering incubus of viral plague'.

Simply put, don't be an eye sore, looking shoddy and unkept, or smell like a damp towel at the gym!

It's not only about health and wellbeing, hygiene habits have an impact on your personal, intimate and social life too. Truth-be-told!

Hands

Hands were used for communication between humans until languages emerged and were robust enough to substitute gestures. It is perhaps why to this day that we gesticulate vehemently when we want to push our point.

Therefore, our hands draw a lot of attention, and speaks volumes of our hygiene. Even to the point of using them as the tool to size up a person starting from the handshake! We are wired that way!

Never ever take for granted that no one will notice badly kept hands. Wash them frequently, keep your nails neat and trim, watch for bad habits (never bite your nails or the skin around them).

Ladies if you choose to paint your nails pick a nude shade that is more forgiving! If you pick a darker colour, remember chipped nail polish is spotted miles away.

Dental

Your smile is your best accessory! Use it to your advantage! One of the first self-care tips we learn as children – yes brush twice, daily!

However, be mindful of bad breath, caused by dental issues, halitosis, smoking, drinking tea or coffee, or that onion-salad for lunch!

It would serve you well to have a mouthwash handy, adopt a habit of breath checks at regular intervals, refresh your breath with tic-tak, or an alternate, before a meeting, and check your teeth and mouth in the mirror after you have eaten! Lipstick on teeth or face (for ladies), chapped lips are never good looks!

Always, always check for Dragon Breath! Many a meeting have been ruined for many because of it! (did someone say Dracarys?)

Bath

So, living on a sunny island, close to the equator brings with it its own set of challenges! numero-uno? – Humidity!

A bit of Science 101, for the less savvy lot: all healthy humans have bacteria on their skin! 1000's of species outnumbering human cells 10:1 and adding 1.5kg to your body weight! Bacteria multiplies! Too much of bacteria causes infections a.k.a rashes!

Now to this mix, add sweat producing humidity and you are serving your bacteria a five-course meal.

So simply put: Humidity = Sweat = Bacteria Food = ODOR.

Do everyone a favor, bath regularly specially before human interaction, preferably use soap and such, for the overly pedantic, a body brush. And while we certainly can't prevent sweating, we can prevent overpowering BO (Body Odor). Invest in a good deodorant, and best used directly after a shower.

Keep your bacteria buddies in check and BO at bay – or do a job that does not require human interaction – Thank you!

Hair & Beard (as applicable)

A topic of speculation, basically this calls for a little uncommon common sense. This is quite subjective taking into consideration the organization culture you are expected to fit in to. Not to stereotype, but imagine banker and an artist? Worlds apart because of what their jobs demand.

Well if you fall into the gray area between a rigidly professional work environment and a chaotically creative one, just remember GROOM your hair. Guys, Girls and all collective others (no discrimination here) – no matter the length: neat, groomed and clean! No flecks, no lice, no flyaway. Tame the unruly.

If you have a beard, the magic word for you is "MAINTAIN". Bring out the wax, the trimmer and the whole circus if you must. No one wants to look at a tangled mess of chin hair. Ladies if you happen to have face hair, please invest in taking care of it. Scraggly eyebrows are great if you are Oscar the Grouch, if not please add them on to the list of facial hair that needs care!

Clothes

Have you ever wondered why we wear clothes and spend a considerable portion of our hard-earned money on it? Well modesty is the first and most obvious reason, a close second could be protection from the elements, but clothing also serves as an adornment which signifies one's status and personal identification.

While 'each unto their own' applies to varied fashion senses, a few sensible tips are: buy well fitted clothes, invest in wardrobe essentials, and treat your clothes well and they will look better for longer.

Now going back to the science 101: where we discussed the topic of sweat, please note that sweat is absorbed into the fabric that touches your skin along with the bacteria causing, you guessed it – odor!

Re-wearing, once worn clothes after a wash will only re-introduce a nest of bacteria back on to the surface of your skin – defeating the purpose of the shower. Make sure your clothes are appropriately cleaned. Some items of clothing like jeans on the other hand is an exception, however, do consider washing them, before they start to stand on their own!!

A special mention to something that deserves a chapter unto its own is: SOCKS and Footwear! That odor of fermenting milk that can knock out a small village? Fondly referred to as 'toe jam'? Is caused by dead skin cells, skin oil and sweat residue, dirt, and even bacterial or fungal organisms. This vile concoction in a small enclosed area - is powerful enough to lay dead an elephant! Socks, like underwear should never be re-used! Footwear should be regularly cleaned and dried out before re-use.

Please we beseech you!!

Invest in the essentials

Create your own personal grooming kit! This should include a mini toothbrush and toothpaste, mouth wash, soap/body wash, hand wash, shampoo, deo, nail clippers and razors and other personal care necessities. These are essentials that you as an individual must always possess for personal upkeep. Having a ready to go pack saves you the trouble of scrambling should you choose to be spontaneous!

We would recommend you go as far as including a small carry-pouch of essential items in your back-pack or handbag or even keep a set at work/car, etc. Always be prepared!

Don'ts



- **Don't make your budget an impediment to 'kitting up' right**

Being well dress can be achieved even on a small budget. A small closet full of quality clothes that actually fit make you look so much better than ill-fitting items ever will.

Invest in staples, stick to a basic colour palette which will provide you with endless mix and match options. Favour quality over quantity, invest wisely and always look at durability and finish in any piece of clothing.

Embellishments and Accessories can serve the trends and requires far less investment. There are plenty of tips out there to look fashionable on a budget.

- **Don't wear things you can't carry**

Awareness is key! Don't kid yourself in to following a trend if it does not suit you! Avoid fashion faux pas, and resist the urge to give in. Things seldom look like they do on the runway or mannequin. Alas, we must let some trends go.

Seriously contemplate an ultra-trendy purchase. Invest wisely on wardrobe staples which are timeless.

- **Don't EVER be seen in dirty clothes**

Unless you are 'cast away', there in no excuse for adorning dirty, poorly kept torn clothes. Sorry to say, there is no perceivable reason you should put on dirty clothes in the first place – refer to the clothes subheading above!

Clothes should be cleaned and unwrinkled. Avoid wearing stained items. Some would go far as to keep a change in the office incase of a mishap – spilled coffee or splash from a passing vehicle.

Anticipate the unexpected!

Social Media

Do's



- **Understand that not EVERYTHING needs to be on social media**

Not everyone needs to be privy to every meandering detail of your everyday life. Some people go to great extent to curate the best pictures for their feed, or to create an illusion of perfection. Unless you are an influencer, no human with a demanding career can keep up with these requirements.

A play by play update on social media is not required unless you are trying really hard to prove or compensate for something – Social Media after all is a network – not a diary. Don't give people the privilege of knowing every little detail about you. This could be dangerous – cyber stalking and identity theft is a thing.

Moreover, mature adults know that just because it's not posted on social media doesn't mean its not happening. Progress in private.

- **Understand that you can't CONTROL social media**

Social media is now an integral part of modern life and a useful marketing tool. Social networking has embedded itself in our culture, some go as far to state that social media improves our life experience.

However, social media brings with it a tirade of modern-day issues as well. There are the internet trolls, haters and hackers, who like to hide behind the anonymity social media offers. Whatever you post is immediately out there, can be screen shot and stored, shared or misquoted, however wholesome a post you believe it to be.

Keep that in mind and keep close tabs on who you allow in to your close circles

- **It's not only about YOUR posts: it's about the posts you interact with - and what EACH OF THEM tell about you**

We all know and have at some point enjoyed the power of 'Likes' on social media. Contemporary purchasing trends, audiences and attitudes are influenced by trending posts, which have gained momentum through likes.

As much as we need to pay close attention to the content we post, we need to be mindful of the content of the posts we interact as well. Platforms like LinkedIn show a clear trail of our activity to whoever opts to follow us. Seeing as you are creating a brand for yourself be extremely mindful of what you choose to like.

What you like shows clear affiliations to subjects that you are passionate about. Best tip in this occasion, steer clear of extreme opinions even if you do agree. Don't leave room for preconceived notions.

- **Decide the visibility of each of your social media platforms: but when/if it DOES become public, make sure it is not hugely inconsistent**

While one may decide to portray a 'Corporate Kyle' on LinkedIn and a 'Party-animal Kyle' on Instagram, this is perfectly acceptable, given the nature of content one is expected to share on such platforms.

However, we are alluding to the absolute Jekyll and Hyde scenarios where you morph into a completely different personality. Be critically cautious about the image you want to create. Having a corporate persona and an easy-going persona is fine, but keep the consistency going.

- **Decide which content goes into what platform**

As mentioned above, using good judgement when posting content is essential. LinkedIn is not the platform to post the clips of the rock concert you attended or the cute puppy pictures, as it is considered to be a more formal networking platform.

Similarly, spare people from having to go through your puppy sleeping, eating, bathing, playing with a ball, playing with a rope, every hour. This is spam really, if you think about it. Puppy could be cute but enough already....

What goes on where and how often is something you need to pay close attention to. Always consider the audience.

Don'ts



- **Don't take offense to negative comments : play it 'smooth'**

Everyone is entitled to have their own opinion, and a negative comment or two may pop up. Play it smooth and hopefully your friend circle is cool enough to know when to back off. Know when to lay off and not engage the person further. If you can pass it off as a joke, great!

If however things are getting too heated, never rise to the challenge publicly, take it off line and handle the now 'debate' off line. Never turn it in to a public spectacle that someone will screen shot and share.

- **Don't get into long drawn out arguments - unless it adds value to your positioning**

If a comment or two turns out into a large-scale battle of wits, always keep it clean and relevant to the topic. Be prudent enough to stop when the going is good and public curiosity is piqued. However, don't resort to cheap pointless banter – keep it chill, classy, funny and relevant.

- **Don't think that one big surge means you made it : make sure your coverage is consistent**

So, you have got an obscene number of likes on your previous post and you are still basking in the endorphin surge! However, if you don't want to seem like a flash in the pan, you need to keep your audience now frequently engaged. Work out a posting schedule that does not make you look too desperate but decently wanton enough to stay on in the public gaze.

- **Don't copy others - be willing to invest the time to think about how to be unique**

Reposting with moderation is fine (With credit where due). However, excessive use of borrowed material shows a lack of creativity.

Keep your content fresh and simple. Post content that you believe in and as much as possible create original content. Take the time to contemplate and create original content which ultimately portrays the authentic you!

- **Don't put anything out anything that you may later regret**

This is particularly hard as you only regret things after it has been done. So, to this end, it's best to think, re-think and often over think content that you share on social platforms.

These could be anything from cheesy photos with gang signs, impulse posting of that wild night out, compromising positions, awkward captions – basically anything that falls into the category of drunken text to an ex – which you will wake up to and regret!

Face to Face interactions

Do's



- **Tick the boxes when it comes to the basics**

Master the basics of introduction. For some this will flow naturally, for others this could take a bit of practice. Either way, have the basics down to a pat, as this could be the first impression you create.

Presences is communicated through a confident relaxed posture, a firm handshake and a genuine smile. Have business cards on hand, but don't seem over eager to exchange cards with everyone. Always reciprocate if someone offers you theirs. Be attentive to the conversation and use the opportunity to network wisely. When creating your personal brand, connections matter.

- **Understand the situation : understand the audience**

While networking is an essential component of growing your personal brand, acknowledging the context, in which you network matters the most. While a corporate cocktail is the ideal situation and the audience to forge these connections; a wedding or funeral is not the appropriate place to pitch a business idea. If you make a connection great. A quick exchange of cards with a promise of a call or email is fine and won't irk your host or the mourners.

However, going to your friend's brothers funeral, seeing a celebrity there and then posing for selfies and exchanging cards is just plain rude and you may find yourself being unfriended – true story!

- **Be prepared for the engagement - do your homework**

Building your brand and increasing your influence requires a bit of pre-work which will help you maximise the number and quality of connections you make. First is to set some outcomes you would expect from an event. The types of people, potential clients, media etc and what you would achieve making such a connection.

Should you come across the guest list, or names of speakers, do some homework on them on LinkedIn etc so you have a basis for introductory conversations. If possible and you have some mutual interest reach out in advance.

Plan your outfit and try it out in advance, get it laundered and occasion ready, be prepared to collect a number of business cards and keep an app on your phone ready to take down notes alongside names and numbers this will come in handy. Also, keep in mind a few unique talking points of your business, and keep them succinct and concise, and always engage the person in conversation – do avoid a long drawn out harangues.

- **Gauge the level of intimacy you are expected to display**

When networking do use a little intuition and try to match the level of familiarity and intimacy your acquaintance is sending out. These are little subliminal signals you need to watch for and don't blurt out the entire content of their LinkedIn, as they may feel like they are being stalked! Instead casually introduce similar subjects to the conversation which they can pick up and elaborate on, and thereby guide the conversation – it helps to be in control.

- **Be sensitive to culture (national and organizational)**

Should you somehow find yourself in culturally diverse settings, it helps to be privy to and sensitive to certain nuances. For instance, with different nationalities; do remember that females from Islamic nations shy away from handshakes and a polite acknowledgement in this instance would be a polite nod. That being said do let the lady take the initiative, if she does offer her hand, then going in for a handshake is fine.

In organisations, often the culture differs, where some organisations address even the CEO by their first name, others require a more formal address of Mr or even Sir for the CEO or Director. Watch out for cues and follow the same. Some people are very sensitive regarding their titles. Unless invited to use their first names always address them formally at the first instance.

Don'ts



- **Don't shy away from meeting people and making introductions**

While it may not particularly be your personality trait to be outgoing, don't shy away from introductions. Introductions and networking are useful on many fronts. After all 'humans are by nature social creatures' as Aristotle put it.

We depend on society more than we care to believe. Knowing people often gives us an edge. We are all socially interconnected...the concept Six degrees of separation is the idea that all people are six, or fewer, social connections away from each other...with social media this is more so believable than we care to accept. So why not attempt to make these connections in person?

Anyone who 'does not partake of society, is either beast or a God' (Aristotle) – since we are neither (ego's permitting), I guess we have to resort to networking.

- **Don't be overbearing or over eager**

While networking opportunities hold endless prospects, to the socially adapt extroverted bunch of us these sessions are our forte and we take to it like fish to water. However, do bear in mind, to the less experienced or the introverted folks, these social situations are a bit daunting.

Do therefore use your skills of observation and intuition when making a new connection. Your exuberance and enthusiasm could be perceived as overbearing. When you try to compensate for the lack of enthusiasm, then you are perceived as over eager. So, do watch yourself.

- **Don't talk all the time - take time to listen**

Continuing from the point above, try not to launch off in to a theatrical soliloquy, while you maybe trying to keep the conversation going, the other party may quite well be planning their escape route, or worse, adapting the 'smile and nod' maneuver while you drone on.

So do catch yourself if you have this tendency, or that of cutting one off when they try to interject. Do instead politely ask them to continue. Always keep the conversation possession balanced to that both parties are equally engaged.

- **Be sensitive to others around you - don't try and outshine and score cheap 'brownie points' at the expense of others**

Dropping names or cutting down people are very cheap ways to score points with new acquaintances and often leave a bad after taste of a meeting. Adhere to the policy of never saying something about somebody behind their back that you would not dare tell them to their face.

Avoid trying to make others look bad to make you look good. Also don't fall into the game of mine is bigger than yours, with regards to connections. Be sensitive. Be classy. People will learn who has better influence when the time comes.

- **Don't underestimate the benefits of a 'wingman'**

A wingman or woman can be the perfect antidote for many an ill.

The most obvious benefit is the synergy and the ability of a wingman to balance and complement you and vice versa. If the wingman's networking game is strong, then you are at a definite advantage. Additionally, you don't have to go it alone, you all ways have each other to fall back on and pull each other in to another introduction or conversation.

A wing-man can make social situations a little less daunting, and they are excellent at bringing up your strong points at opportune moments in conversations. So yes – do find an Iceman to your Maverick or a Jorah to your Daenerys!

The 'language' you speak

Do's



- **Gauge the level of intimacy you are expected to portray**

The primary functions of a language are communication, expression and direction. Which can be spoken in many different forms. Examples are formal, colloquial, jargon, and slang which are quite common. Now imagine instances for each of these. Formal speech is probably best used when addressing gatherings, meetings and such whereas the other extreme would be slang which you use among friends.

When speaking we automatically adjust our styles to fit the gathering, leaving the loosest level of conversation for those we are most intimate with. Speaking 'frankly' to friends comes almost naturally.

Discretion is advised when entering new circles, perhaps lay low on the colourful language and slang till you have established levels of comfort and there by intimacy. Also, be vigilant of the crowd around you before you drop the 'F' bomb.

- **Speaking in a crowd – bring everyone on the conversation**

It's easy to get carried away when you are speaking to someone and the conversation is good – especially if you are acquainted. You soon get passionate about your point and virtually shut out everyone else around you. This is great for getting to know a person better but a real buzz kill for those who have to stand around watching the two of you converse about a topic they can't add much to.

Be mindful of this, it's natural and could happen to the best of us, but it's rude to cut out people of a conversation, so always bring in little openings where the others in the group can share opinions and contribute and re-enter the conversation.

- **Topics of conversation - keep it light and neutral unless it's a known crowd**

Similar to the language we use and the 'when' and 'where', the topics of conversation we pick up are no exception. Unless you are in a close intimate gathering where loud and opinionated conversation is the norm, accepted and appreciated. It's always best to stay away from controversial topics for formal or less intimate gatherings.

Sensitive areas include religion, politics and gender. If these topics are broached take a neutral stance, and politely change the topic to something less controversial. Many a battle have been fought over the same, so steer clear.

Don'ts



- **Don't speak in a language EVERYONE there is not comfortable with/doesn't understand**

The easiest way to make another person squirm is to talk in a language they do not understand or is not fully comfortable speaking in. What's worse is speaking in a small group and everyone except one person understanding and feeling left out.

Do be sensitive, inclusive and strive to include everyone in the conversation by establishing first who you maybe excluding with your language of choice. Always settle on the majority and worst comes to worst appoint one in the group as your designated translator.

- **Try not to speak jargon - specially in a mixed crowd**

Jargon is great for a bunch of techies at a tech conference, where everyone is speaking the same jargon. If you are within the same industry the Jargon is acceptable. However if you are in a mix crowd and get some quizzical looks, because what you're saying sounds like: 'a Java Python in a Red Hat' then be kind enough to dumb it down for the rest, or change the topic to one everyone in the group is comfortable with.

- **Don't flaunt your vocabulary if you don't have to**

Now you may be well read, and delight in a bit of intellectual conversation where you can flaunt your excellent vocabulary – yes, we all are guilty of this sometimes. While certain audiences will appreciate this eloquence, some may struggle grappling with the big words you are spewing, as English is a second language for most of us. Be sensitive to this and you would be fine.

“ If people like you they will
listen to you : but if they
TRUST you, they will do
business with you ”

Zig Ziglar

Some final thoughts

You define the brand not the other way around

Remember : this is YOUR BRAND : and you need to be in control of it. NEVER allow the 'Brand' to take a life form of its own : and govern YOU. It's a pain to try and 'live up to' something you are not inherently. It's one thing to aspire to be someone : it's quite another to actually BE that person. NEVER ever make the mistake of loving your 'persona' more than you actually love yourself !

You can always REBRAND yourself

Many brands have successfully rebranded themselves : and so can you. If whatever you are doing to brand yourself isn't really hitting its mark : or if the Brand created no longer represents you : have the courage to rebrand yourself. Contexts change. Markets change. Needs change. Expectations change. We change : and with it, maybe so should your 'brand' !

- Go back to basics. See what actually worked for you which is still relevant and what is not
- Understand which stakeholders matter the most now - and who doesn't
- Look at the mix of tools which are available to you : and what suits the 'segment' you are trying to 'sell to'
 - Craft your persona again : and see if this is a sensible characterization of the 'current' you

Then, start all over again !

Working within your limitations : but within your passion too

Remember that we all have limitations. Be absolutely clear about your own limitations. If you are NOT good at something don't position yourself around it. Passion is one thing. Talent is another.

NEVER mix the two up. Try and find ways to work around your passion : but around your core strengths too. If the two meet : fantastic ! If not, try and find ways around it - or stick to your competencies ! NEVER brand yourself around a competency you don't have !

Decide if you want to enter a market or create a market

You can decide to compete in a crowded space : or you can decide to make your own space : each have their own inherent positives and negatives.

- Compete ONLY if you have a USP (unique selling proposition : a fancy term to mean a competitive advantage)
- Venture to make your own market ONLY if you are certain there is a big enough market in the first place : and a VERY REAL need
- Either way, NEVER try to be everything to everybody : you really MUST decide who you will 'appeal to' and who you don't really care about. There really isn't pleasing everybody!

If you are a brand - you have a shelf life

Remember you have a shelf life. EVERYONE does. So, as any product, you too will have a maturity curve : and eventually, an 'expiry.' Understand the dynamics at each stage : and though shelf life CAN be extended : don't over extend it either.

The KEY is to find what makes you relevant : and if there is no relevance : there really is no real point in flogging that horse any more !

Remember - you need to have a 'process' to ensure your brand maintains itself

Don't kid yourself : no one is THAT disciplined. At the beginning : when you start building that Brand for yourself its all exciting and the countless endorsements you get spurs you on. However, this 'rush' wanes off quite quickly (unless you are REALLY VAIN !) So, build in simple processes to ensure your 'marketing machine' is working consistently : over the longer term.

- Dedicate a specific time to put your posts
- Make a list of things you want to do as far as content is concerned
- and keep a small notebook to write ideas when you get them (you will often forget them when you really want to do it !)
- Build extra content and keep - so that you can put things out even when you are really busy : or sick
- Try and see if you can rope in someone to do this for you : and pay if you have to : so that it HAPPENS CONSISTENTLY.

“ Be YOURSELF :
everyone else is
already taken ”

Oscar Wilde

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