



The Brand New Brand You!

I've had some feedback recently that people would like some support in finding new roles, building their personal profile and generally improving their employability. Brand New, Brand You is a Think Oak! Blog post to help you improve your personal brand in the increasingly crowded and competitive job market.

Brands touch every part of our lives, almost every waking minute of every day. We interact with hundreds if not thousands of brands each week, some consciously, some unconsciously.

What is a brand?

A brand can be a product, a service, an idea, a company, a place, or indeed a person. In my own simplistic view, a brand is the emotional and psychological relationship a product, service, organisation or person has with others. You don't have to directly interact with a brand to have an opinion about it.

Strong brands elicit thoughts, emotions, and sometimes physiological responses from those that interact with them. Don't believe me? Look at the table of brand identities below think about the brand – How do they make you feel? How would you describe each brand from your perspective?



Depending on your experience of a particular brand, what you've heard about that brand from people you trust, what your background is or even where you come from, your opinion will be coloured accordingly. YOU also have a brand whether you're aware of it or not.

The Brand You

Have you taken any time out recently to think about your personal brand and what you stand for? Why should you even worry about Brand You? Look at your personal brand as an investment. Brand You has the potential to last longer than your own lifespan. While the projects you're working on might finish or you move roles, your personal brand will persist and (hopefully) add value to each new project you're involved with or role you move to. If you consider yourself to be in your particular career path for the long-haul, whether it's a private business, the Public Sector, or your own business, a good personal brand is an invaluable investment.

People will follow your brand from project to project and role to role if they feel connected to it. When launching new projects, your personal brand has the potential to guarantee you never have to start from scratch again. And because your personal brand, more often than not, is built from the thoughts and words and reactions of other people, it's shaped by how you present yourself publicly. This is something that you have control over. You can decide how you would like people to see you and then work on publicly being that image. Consider your goals for the brand. If you want to sell an expensive course in landscape photography you'll need to be seen as someone with the authority to teach others on the topic. If you want to get work for high-end blue-ship clients you'll need to be seen as a runaway talent with a professional attitude. Two useful questions to ask yourself are:

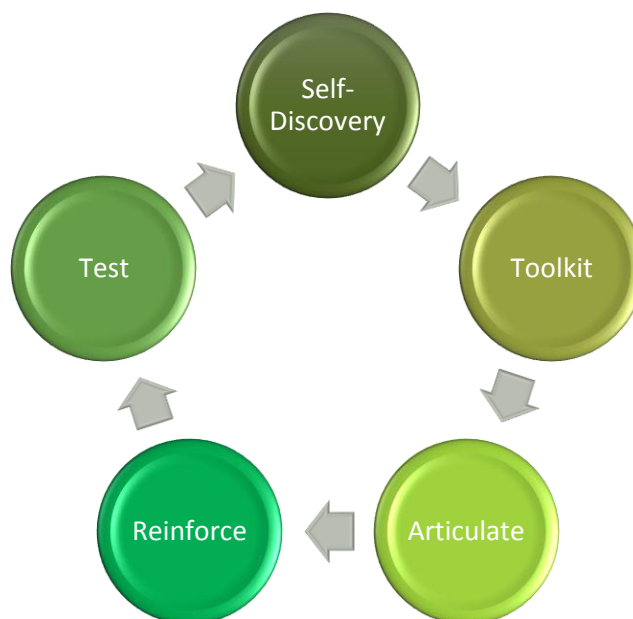
What are people saying / thinking / feeling about you when you walk into a room?

What would you like them to be thinking and saying?

Your personal brand is composed of your actions and output in three main areas:

- **Value Proposition:** What do you stand for?
- **Differentiation:** What makes you stand out?
- **Marketability:** What makes you compelling?

Well it's never too late to START creating the Brand New Brand You! Over the course of the next few pages I'll cover some key areas for you to think about, work on, and evolve in order to improve Brand You, STARTing with Self-discovery.



What parts of your business life are you passionate about?

Stephen R. Covey, author of the bestseller [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#), suggests asking yourself three questions:

- 🌱 Do I like doing it?
- 🌱 Am I good at it?
- 🌱 Does the world need it?

"If you have a passion that you're good at but the world doesn't need it, you've got a useless passion," says Covey. "If you're focusing on what the world needs and sell out your passion, you sell out what is uniquely you. But if you can make a living doing something that you're really good at and like-what a combination!"

What have I done / am I doing that I am most proud of?

Don't limit your answers to this question just to your business life. Try and come up with at least 5 things from across your personal and business life. Are there any similarities or themes? Do they link in any way to what you are passionate about? (They don't have to!) Are there any of your personal values involved in making these activities such a success? Are they recent successes or from a few years ago?

What qualities or characteristics make you distinctive from your competitors or your colleagues?

Whether it's your unique style of leadership, the way you present to an audience or the personal energy you bring to a room when you enter, each of us have distinctive qualities that make us stand out. What are yours?

What would your colleagues or your customers say is your greatest and clearest strength?

What do you get compliments about most frequently; your perseverance, the quality of your business cases, your ability to mediate difficult conversations, your telephone manner with customers? What would you like it to be?

What benefits does 'Brand You' deliver?

If you were a product, and indeed you are the product of Brand You, and had to pull a marketing brief together, what would you talk about as the benefits you bring? You've already worked up your Brand Values, so that should form part of your benefits story, you've already established what you're passionate about and what makes you distinctive; and you've also established your greatest and clearest strength. Pulling all of these together should start to give you a compelling case as to why somebody would buy Brand You as opposed to Brand Them.

What do you want to be famous for?

Ok, I'm not talking about going on a reality TV show, or getting 15 minutes of fame for rescuing a cat from a tree. I'm talking about the future of Brand You. What do you want to be known for?

- 🌱 'He's the best Project Manager I've ever met - you need him on this programme. He won't be cheap though, he's really in demand!'
- 🌱 'She's amazing! I saw her talking about Leadership at a conference last year. She's so passionate about organisational change. We could do with her advice on the changes we want to make to our business'.

You get the idea! How do you want to be known and talked about in 5 years' time?

How am I measuring myself?

Lastly, and arguably the one that always gets left behind with any brand launch, is a baseline measurement. How is your brand currently perceived? If you're going to improve your personal brand, you need to understand where you're starting from. What do people think of Brand You today?

There are a number of metrics / methods to use to gauge the success of your personal brand and that of the Brand New, Brand You. The simplest way to test the effectiveness of any brand is to do market research. The same is true here.

Ask for structured feedback - talk to your peers, managers, colleagues and customers and gauge their perception of Brand You. This could take the form of a 360 degree questionnaire, a face to face meeting with a focus on strengths and areas that could be improved or a combination of the two. You may wish to focus some questions to test out people's perceptions to the answers you've given to some of the previous questions around Brand You benefits and what differentiates you from the rest.

Brand You Vision Statement

Now, you've had chance to work through the answers to these questions, it is useful to create a statement that encapsulates everything you want your brand to be. This will be your Brand New, Brand You Vision.

A strong vision statement should include:

1. Your ambition for Brand You, describing the ideal future
2. Encompass some of your core values
3. Your differentiators and passions

I've posted some examples below, just to help you get your creative juices flowing:

'I will provide the best technical support and customer service to our clients, helping improve their business and lives, striving to solve problems with a positive attitude that spreads to my co-workers'

'I will be leading a small team of application developers to build market leading mobile tools for children with learning difficulties to make their lives easier and that of their families. That will fulfil my desire to make a difference to people's lives, provide enough money for myself and my family to enjoy life and hopefully inspire others to take a risk and do something worthwhile.'

'I am now running the restaurant I've worked in for 5 years. Through sheer determination, hard work, and my impeccable skills in dealing with customers of all kinds, I have a great reputation within the industry. I have also earned the respect of my staff, my superiors, and my customers alike.'

'I have just published my fifth book on leadership and people management. I am now in the envious position of being able to leave my career and share my time equally doing the things I love - spending time with family and friends, writing, walking, photography and being surrounded by nature'

That concludes the first step in START. Good luck with your Self-Discovery.

Next is the second step in the START process, Toolkit Development.

sTart – Toolkit Development

What tools will help you deliver your brand to the outside world and what do you need to have in your own toolkit to drive the success of Brand You? In this post I'm going to start with the basics.

Your Curriculum Vitae - CV

You cannot underestimate the importance of a good CV. This is your first impression and your chance to capture your potential employer's attention. It does not matter what job you are applying for – whether you want an entry-level position at a sales office, or a more senior position in a large business, you have got to have a good CV, otherwise you are not even going to get your foot in the door.

Its purpose is to list your accomplishments, your skills, and your qualifications, especially as to how they pertain to the job for which you are applying. You have to show your prospective employer that you are right for the job. Not only that, but you have to outline your experiences and your successes – otherwise, how will he or she know that you are truly qualified for the job? Furthermore, the document also serves as an indicator as to how well you can communicate and how good you are at organisation.

Most importantly, remember to keep it short. It should be a maximum of two pages, in total. By all means build up a bigger personal portfolio document where you can capture all the detail from your career that you can draw upon for interviews and more detail should a potential employer need them.

When applying for a specific advertised role, always customize your CV. Follow the word choices that the company uses, focus on the credentials that this particular employer values most. And if you don't know what those are, ask and find out!

In the earlier section on Self-Discovery I talked about the importance of understanding how you can differentiate yourself from others. What are your Unique Selling Points for this position? Show how you can make / save the company money and show how you can resolve the problems that they have.

Don't lie! Some people think that by putting little or bigger white lies in their job history, lists of successes, courses, training and experience - they will get away with it. You won't. And that goes for your referees also. Your interviewers will check you out. They will check your qualifications, then referees, then work history, they will check everything. They are used to people lying to them, despite the pleasant smiles you may see. It's all part of their job to pick the best candidate.

One final point – CHECK IT OVER before you send it out! Check it for spelling, grammar, dates, formatting and against the role profile. Then ask someone you trust to check it again. You would not believe the number of CV's I see every year with spelling mistakes, unfinished sentences, incorrect dates and horrible grammar. Point made.

Online CV's

There is a difference between a paper CV and an online CV as far as readability is concerned. Some people make the mistake of just copying and pasting their hard-copy CV's into an online format. It's better to consider an online CV as a completely different resource and take advantage of some benefits that it offers.

a. Use bulleted lists - This holds true for paper resumes as well, but large blocks of text are even harder to read online. People tend to scan content online more than they do in hard copy.

b. Break text up with headers - Headers make CV's easier to scan and make keywords stand out more for the reader.

c. Hyperlink text - If you've written articles online, have been published in some way or you've developed your own blog, hyperlink the title in your CV to save the reader some trouble of copying and pasting the URL into a browser.

Read!

No matter how much you already know, you can always learn more. In Self-Discovery you went through a process to discover your values, passions, differentiators and your Brand You Vision. You need to think about what you need to learn, and develop a strategy to accomplish that. To enhance Brand You keep learning and reading everything you can to give you an edge in your field.

Use any 'down-time' in your day, on your way to and from work or at lunch, to catch up on the latest news from your industry or field of interest. I've found a good way to collate useful information quickly is to set up newsfeed dashboards on iGoogle or using Google Reader. This takes a little time initially, but does allow you to dip in and out, throughout the day to keep updated on the latest from your industry. Another great online tool is Alltop. You can select from thousands of categorised newsfeeds and personalise a homepage of all your favourites. This is also available on mobile devices so that you can pick news up on the move.

Email Address

Your email address is an important part of your personal brand, especially when you're in any correspondence with potential employers. If you can afford it, and it really isn't that expensive, try to buy an appropriate domain name. Yourname@yourdomain.com does portray a professional image and if you decide to build a website or blog (See Part 4) you can use the domain for that too.

Gmail is an accepted alternative, but again try to keep your address to firstname.lastname@gmail.com if you can. Hotgirl435@gmail.com or LoveBieber25@gmail.com really don't create a professional persona!

Business Cards

If you don't already have business cards with your current role, or want to build Brand You outside of your day job, then getting business cards printed is important, especially for networking events or job fairs. There are plenty of online resources that you can use that deliver high quality products such as Vistaprint out there. Keep the design simple and professional and limit the number of contact methods you use. Try and make the design fresh and different to make it distinctive.

Build your Profile and Network

Six degrees of separation works – the people you know, know people, who know people. Everyone you encounter has someone in their network with the potential to help you. The best relationships are formed by way of "introductions" or "referrals." Everyone you meet has someone in their network who may be a potential client, supplier, employee, or employer of yours sometime in the future.

Join LinkedIn

As I'm sure you'll be aware, LinkedIn is THE business networking resource on the internet with approximately 150 million users worldwide at the time of writing this post. It complements your fundamental networking skills in building relationships of value which you would use with people you interact with in person. It offers you a world-wide connection, a way to personally brand yourself, make contacts for jobs, and have a chance to acknowledge good people throughout your past and interact with like-minded business people from your industry or with your interests.

A few steps to get started and make the most of LinkedIn:

1. First of all sign up if you have not already. The basic service is free.
2. Fill out the entire profile - Include as much information in your profile as you can.
 - a. Add your photograph - Elementary you might say, but do you have a professional picture uploaded or is it a random picture you copied from Facebook? As the photograph space on LinkedIn is small, you want your picture to be a head shot taken in a professional environment with no distractions in the background. Take a good look at your picture today and ask yourself what an employer's first impression would be.
 - b. Employment History - A basic field that needs to be filled out properly. Transfer your CV data to LinkedIn and make sure you get all dates correct. Include all jobs you have had, unless it's more than ten, in which case you only include the most important ones.
 - c. Summary - This section is often overlooked. In the summary section you want to put your elevator pitch (If you haven't got one – See Part 3 of Brand New, Brand You!).

Write who you are, what your skills are and most importantly what you can do for the reader. Always think how you can add value and structure your skills and experience with bullet points to make it pleasing on the eye.

- d. Specialities - Another overlooked section, mainly because nobody knows what it means. The specialities box allows you to throw in all the keywords that reflect your experience and skills. The beauty here is that every keyword is searchable, meaning you increase your chances of being found by recruiters.
 - e. Recommendations - Endorsements from peers, customers and managers are essential for your job search. Although not a knock out factor in the early stages of a hiring process, it can be a deciding factor at the last stage. If there are two final candidates for a job, the number and quality of LinkedIn recommendations can be the decider. Get two to three recommendations per job you have had if you can. Aim high and ask previous managers and other people with impressive titles as it will look better on your profile.
3. Connect, Connect, Connect - Think about people of value from your past who you might want to link with. Search for their names and invite them to reconnect. Then take the time to write them an endorsement (even a sentence is good). Your name is tied to this so make sure it is authentic and also reflects well on Brand You. If you keep doing this and helping people your own endorsements will grow over time and be well-earned. Endorsements of you initiated by others are obviously best. You really don't want to ask for an endorsement unless you are clear they would love to give you one and are simply looking for an opportunity.
4. Jobs, Groups, Companies and more – I've walked you through the basics, but LinkedIn has much more to offer you. Take some time to explore other areas of the site and get involved. Follow Companies you're interested in – either your competitors, your customers or prospective employers. Join Groups so that you can LinkIn with other like-minded people and contribute to discussion threads. Lastly, many companies are now using LinkedIn for their main route to source new employees. Use the advanced search function within the jobs section to get the most of your searches.

Network the old-fashioned way

One tremendous tool to help build and promote your personal brand is to learn how to Network. Make your way to high level networking events. Before you arrive, set a goal to make a few quality connections at the event. Find out what you can do for the people you meet. Great business networking is about helping others and building lasting connections, and you don't have to contain your networking to just events. When you get home, add your new contacts to Outlook, Facebook and LinkedIn. Help these people connect with business opportunities, employment leads and personal resources. Try to keep in touch with your network. Send them useful information, introduce them to some of your network and make sure you meet up every now and then. Individuals with a strong network of real connections don't have to interview for future jobs, they get business opportunities and they have a 'safety net' if a real need arises.

That concludes the second step in START. The third step in the START process is Articulate.

stArt - Articulate

Brand You is who you already are, whether you are consciously aware of it or not. Brand New, Brand You is about building a name for yourself based on what you have achieved and what you want to achieve and what differentiates you from others. It essentially is your reputation. The benefits you offer to others; your value proposition and your return on investment to prospective employers. And it must be consistent throughout your communications and how you Articulate yourself.

The key to Articulate is how you establish yourself as an expert in your field and is one of the most essential ways to brand yourself. It builds credibility and demonstrates your achievements and proven abilities through various venues, such as by writing articles published in trade journals, giving speeches at conferences and conventions, being quoted by the news media, and the like.

In this post I'm going to focus on a few key areas, namely Your Elevator Pitch, Telephone and Face to Face Interviews and Your Online Presence.

The Elevator Pitch

You're in an elevator, a corridor or at a party and the CEO of the firm you've always wanted to work for, is standing next to you. What do you say?

Elevator pitches are developed to relay just enough information to cause the person you're speaking to, to ask, "Tell me more." If you're lucky, the CEO will say, "If you have a few minutes, I want to hear more." If you're even luckier, your prospective boss will ask you to set up an appointment the next day to meet up. All of that from the development, memorising, and tweaking of a few simple yet incredibly powerful words.

Putting your pitch together

- 1. Who are you?** Introduce yourself and your credentials up front. There's no point in saying anything if the listener has no idea who you are or if you have any credibility.
- 2. What's your objective?** Get to the point quickly about what you are looking for or how that person can help. Being direct not only grabs attention but helps the listener to put your pitch into context.
- 3. What can you do for the listener?** This is where you explain how recruiting you will meet their need. Your goals and dreams are all well and good but remember in the end what you are offering must benefit them. This is your chance to communicate what makes you someone who your audience should consider helping. People typically like to help those that they feel will be successful in the process. There are a few things you should think about when highlighting your qualifications:- industry relevance, leadership, expertise, pedigree, and impact.
- 4. The close** – this is tricky to deliver effectively, but ideally you need an outcome to the conversation. This could be a follow-up meeting with the person you're pitching to, a name of someone who you need to contact to follow-up, or some advice as to how to reach your goal.

Once you have your personal elevator pitch, practice it in front of the mirror. If possible, try to video or audio tape yourself, and watch it in fast forward. You'll be amazed at your nervous habits! Even though you've prepared and practiced, keep it natural.

Interviews

Arguably one of the most important times to articulate Brand You, is at interview. You've got through the CV shortlisting stage, but now you have to impress. More often than not you will have to face a telephone interview before you get to meet a prospective employer face to face.

The Telephone Interview

Eighty percent of human communication is body language—eye contact, facial expressions, the way you move your hands, your behaviours, the way you sit or stand, and all of this is missing during the telephone conversation. However, you still have three powerful ways to get Brand You across:

Tone: Your passion, energy level and pronunciation.

Content: Your expertise and depth of experience.

Quality: Your choice of words and your ability to demonstrate a solid, consistent thought process.

Before the Interview:

- 🌿 If you haven't already, research the company and the position. Visit the company website and review news releases and other public information about the company, including quarterly and annual reports. Learn about any new product releases, any awards or special recognition received by the company. Find out about the structure of the organization, its products or services and the markets it serves. You would be amazed at the number of candidates I've interviewed over the years that miss this crucial step. I've actually terminated interviews at the point I discover that they have not bothered to prepare.
- 🌿 Make sure that you know who you will be speaking with and can check for that person's LinkedIn profile and you should also "Google" them to learn more information.
- 🌿 Revisit the job description and the person specification for the role. Make a special effort to identify any areas where your skills and experience may be of particular value.
- 🌿 Prepare a list of your achievements pertaining to the job description. Specify and quantify your accomplishments, e.g. 'increased sales by x%' or 'reduced costs by y%'. Keep this list in front of you during the interview for you to refer to.
- 🌿 Make a note of any key questions that you wish to ask.
- 🌿 Make sure that you have a copy of your CV with you and ensure you have a pen and notepad to hand.

The Interview:

Ensure that you will be somewhere quiet for the interview itself and that you will not be interrupted. If you have been asked to call at a specific time, ensure that you call at precisely the correct time. If you can't get through, leave a message if you can and also call a secretary/receptionist to show that you called at the right time. Ask when the manager is expected to be free, and try again then. Repeat the same procedure until you make contact. If you have been told that the hiring manager will call you - do not expect the same rules to apply. They will call you when they want to!

- 🌿 Sound interesting/interested, energetic and enthusiastic.
- 🌿 Try smiling while you are talking. Studies have shown that this has a positive effect on the person who is listening. It is also a good idea to stand during a telephone interview as this makes you sound more confident and helps project a positive and professional image.
- 🌿 Be polite and don't swear or use colloquialisms.
- 🌿 Try not to use jargon if at all possible, unless the interviewer introduces it into the conversation.
- 🌿 Use the other person's name regularly throughout the conversation (but not all the time). Also, use the company name a few times.

- 🌱 Be succinct. For most questions a 2-3 minute answer is a good target. Time is always an issue with telephone interviews and you're wasting your own time if you stray off the subject.
- 🌱 Be a good listener. If you do not hear or understand what was said, do not hesitate to ask that it be repeated. Do not make up answers to questions you think you have heard.
- 🌱 Do not bring up salary, holiday entitlements and benefits at this stage.
- 🌱 Have powerful questions written down that you can ask when provided the chance.
- 🌱 Use strong, positive phrases, such as "I know," and avoid weak phrases such as "I think."
- 🌱 Never speak negatively of anyone or anything—a former manager, colleague or company.
- 🌱 Emphasise why you want to go to work for the company you are interviewing with and NOT why you want to leave your current employer.
- 🌱 Do not try to evade any question. If you don't know the answer to any particular question, say so, and then say you'll get the answer and call back.
- 🌱 If something doesn't sound good to you, take note of it. Do NOT confront the interviewer at this stage.
- 🌱 "Close" at the end of the interview. You might use: "I really appreciate your time today, and I am genuinely excited about and interested in this opportunity. Based upon our conversation, is there anything that will keep us from moving to the next step?"

After the Interview:

A post interview thank you letter or email is an excellent way of re-impressing your qualities and abilities on the mind of the interviewer. It may also separate you from others interviewed, and will tell your prospective employer that you are courteous and professional.

The Face to Face Interview

Before the Interview:

Repeat the same steps as for the telephone interview. Depending on the gap between the telephone interview and the face to face interview, there may well have been recent activity within the organisation that you need to be aware of.

Ensure that you are dressed neatly and professionally. Doing so will immediately create an air of quiet confidence that will be evident in how the interviewer responds to you. Get plenty of rest the night before. Many job seekers are so nervous they find it hard to sleep and wind up pacing the floor half the night, only to be exhausted by the time they get to the interview.

Ensure that you get to the interview venue in good time. Leave yourself enough time for traffic problems or any other eventuality that would delay you being on time. I would suggest arriving 15 minutes early, giving you time to relax once you're there, and it creates a good impression.

The Interview:

Be ready to make a good first impression right away. Look your interviewer(s) in the eye and smile warmly. Be ready with a friendly greeting, and offer your hand to shake. You'll score points immediately by getting this right - a clammy limp handshake is not good, but a bone crushing vice-like grip is equally as bad. If you're not sure about your handshake 'quality', ask someone you trust to give you feedback – it is important!

During the interview itself, try to be natural. Don't use the time the interviewer is talking to you to prepare your next answer - if you haven't been listening attentively, it will be blindingly obvious. Punctuate any long speeches by your interviewer with very slight nods of the head - particularly the 'let me tell you a little about what we do here ...' speech. The interviewer knows this by heart, and so is far more interested in your reaction to it. If you are being interviewed by more than one person,

switch your attention periodically. It's good practice to address your remarks to one interviewer only if he or she has just asked you a direct question, but don't turn your back on the rest.

Be confident, you're the expert of Brand You! Nobody knows you better than yourself, and you this is your opportunity to Articulate your passion, your value proposition and why you are the best candidate for the role.

I've listed some generic questions below that I often use with candidates that may help you prepare; obviously you'll get specific role-related competency based questions about the role you've applied for.

- 🌿 Tell me about yourself and your career?
- 🌿 Why do you want the job and why do you want to leave your existing one (if applicable)?
- 🌿 What can you tell me about this company / department / role?
- 🌿 What is the worst feedback you have received? What was it about? How did you react? What did you learn from it?
- 🌿 What motivates you? What frustrates you?
- 🌿 Assuming I offer you this role, what would be the goals you set yourself for the first 30, 60 and 90 days?
- 🌿 What has been your biggest achievement and failure in the last 12 months?
- 🌿 What are you most proud of in your professional life?
- 🌿 How would your last employer describe you?
- 🌿 What strengths would you bring to this role and where would you need some support or development?
- 🌿 How do you manage your time / work under pressure?
- 🌿 What does success look like for you?
- 🌿 How do you deal with conflict?
- 🌿 How do you relax outside of work?

The key is to have lots of examples that you can draw out during the interview to demonstrate your skills and experience. Using the same example more than once to answer a question is not ideal. If you can, practice your answers with someone else.

After the Interview

As with the telephone interview, a thank you letter or email to the person / people who interviewed you is a good idea.

If are offered the job at this stage:

Ask yourself are you genuinely excited about the prospect of working for the company for a fixed term?

- 🌿 If 'yes' – keenly accept – verbally; await the written offer and reply within a few days.
- 🌿 If 'no' – explain to the interviewer why you feel you cannot accept it. Do not wait several weeks before declining – there may be another candidate who genuinely wants the job. Remember to be civil and polite – at some stage you may want to go for another interview with them.

If you are not offered the job:

- 🌱 Review your performance objectively with yourself.
- 🌱 What interested the interviewer?
- 🌱 How could you improve your presentation next time?
- 🌱 Did you get all the points across?
- 🌱 Did you interrupt the interviewer at all, or fail to complete any questions?
- 🌱 Were you positive, aggressive, tense, too laid back, too talkative or taciturn?
- 🌱 What questions were difficult or needed further research?
- 🌱 Try to get some feedback from the interviewer(s). Most people are happy to give feedback, so use it as a golden opportunity to develop.

It may be that there are several more hurdles for you following the 1st face to face interview. Many companies now ask shortlisted candidates to complete psychometric tests, medical or physical tests, analytic tasks, skills tests or other tested measures. Some companies will ask you to attend a second or even third face to face interview, depending on the seniority of the role or the rigour of their recruitment process. They may also ask you to deliver a presentation at this stage of the process. Don't panic...this is all good news. It shows that they're very interested in Brand You! Ensure you repeat some of the key preparation steps above!

Use the second interview to clarify any of your doubts about the organisation including its training program or location. And use the second visit to work out if you like the people you may be working with. Remember this is a two-way process. They may like you, but what's your opinion of them? Use this opportunity to meet individuals, view facilities, review company philosophies and ask any additional questions. Do the employees seem happy, bored, overworked? These are people you will have to spend much of your time with so it is best to find out now.

Second interviews are often occasions for you to be introduced to other potential colleagues as well as the manager - and just as much as it's their mission to find out if they really like you, it's yours to determine if you can happily share an office or desk with them. If you are lucky enough to be introduced to people who would effectively be your peer group, don't be afraid to ask them what it's like to work there.

Your Online Presence

Depending on your field of expertise, your personal brand values and your career goals, you need to think carefully about your online presence. Over 20% of employers (according to careerbuilder.com) research candidates online and 77% of executive recruiters use search engines to research applicants.

If you type your name into Google, where do you appear and more importantly does that article or link represent Brand You?

Your professional image/headline is already created. It is a matter of taking charge, marketing it and building a solid reputation in your industry. Establishing credibility and visibility in your field is essential in building meaningful relationships and elevating your online presence.

Today's business climate is too competitive not to create and build your brand and you need to keep pace with your competition. Not only can your online footprint give you that edge you need when someone comes looking for you, but effectively marketing yourself online can actually bring great opportunities to you. There are many success stories of people who've been discovered on the web and created viable businesses around their passion.

I've already covered LinkedIn and its importance in earlier, but what other areas should you be thinking about to build your personal brand?

Contribute to industry blogs and forums – a great place to build Brand You is on industry specific blogs and forums. You never know who is reading and where those connections might lead. Comment on popular blogs in your field. Contribute on forums related to your field. Leave links to your LinkedIn account so people can learn more about you.

Start your own blog – A blog is a great to begin building your personal brand. Having your own personal website or blog will not only make it easier for people to find you, it will give you a chance sell Brand You. In order to really connect with people, you should personalise your site in a tasteful and professional manner. Post a picture of yourself and tell your audience who you are and how you got where you are today. What you write should exude confidence, but not come across as boastful.

Your web address should contain your name or the name of your company or business, and your website should be appealing to the eye yet simple in design. If you are looking for a new role, be sure to incorporate your CV and a portfolio of your work into your website or blog so that potential employers or clients can view your background and your work. You need to make a great first impression. Because of advancements in technology, many first impressions are formed in the virtual world! I would recommend Wordpress. It's really easy to use, and you can be up and running with a minimal amount of effort and technical know-how!

Not everyone needs to blog (or should) - You don't need to blog to establish an effective brand online. If you do want to blog without the pressure or time commitment, look for opportunities to guest blog. Remember that Twitter is a form of microblogging. Other ways to share your expertise: participate in online forums, contribute to LinkedIn's Q&A section, or submit articles to sites such as eHow or your local or professional equivalent. If you're a dynamic speaker, add podcasts or post videos on YouTube.

Keep your personal brand separate from your company brand - If you're working for an IT firm, don't tweet about the company. Establish yourself as the person on Twitter locally who has all the IT answers. Otherwise you're limiting the power of your personal brand (and what happens when you leave that company?).

Safeguard your privacy - Whether you're using Facebook, LinkedIn, or any of the social media platforms, check your privacy settings. Most people don't realise how much control they have.

Consider keeping your online private and professional lives separate. On Facebook, for example, you might choose to have a personal page for family and friends and a separate page for anyone else. This is a particularly good strategy if your profession has a more conservative public image that differs from your personal beliefs.

It's really important that you keep Brand You fresh. Make sure that you invest some time at least each week to keep your profiles current and your opinions flowing!

That concludes the third step in START. Next is the fourth step in the START process, Reinforce.

staRt - Reinforce

Now that you have started to establish the Brand New Brand You, it is important that you continually reinforce your personal brand. I'll now focus on some key pointers that will keep Brand You fresh and at the front of people's minds.

1. Deliver + 1%

This may seem obvious, but the best way to reinforce Brand You is to DELIVER. Whatever your role, if you consistently deliver to time, cost and quality expectations you're reinforcing your personal brand. Delivering the extra 1% is how you will really differentiate Brand You. What do I mean by 1%? In short, exceed expectations. Going 'the extra mile' will get you noticed – by your managers, by your peers and by your customers. That doesn't mean that you necessarily need to put in long hours every day, although sometimes that might be the case. In my career, I have found that 'Rising Stars' have gone the extra mile by:

- 🌱 Demonstrating a 'Can Do' attitude – People that embrace change initiatives, find ways around problems, take ownership of tasks through to conclusion and are passionate about their job make a difference and are invaluable to high performing teams.
- 🌱 Being a self-starter – People that spot an opportunity to fix a problem, come up with the solution and implement it effectively drive continuous improvement helping their team be more effective and /or efficient.
- 🌱 Continuously looking at ways to improve themselves – People that consistently ask questions with a view to improving themselves, ask to be involved in key initiatives and drive their own personal development planning are often 'stars' of the future.
- 🌱 Always thinking of their customer's needs – People that can think beyond the specific task and ask themselves about why they are doing it in a certain way and putting themselves in their customer's shoes. By doing this they may change or enhance the delivery or even change a process for the better.
- 🌱 Helping others – People that continually support their colleagues in delivery not only help their teams achieve but build a strong reputation with their peers and help build strong professional relationships.
- 🌱 Putting themselves forward for new projects – People that work beyond their job descriptions and volunteer for those important projects that often come up and just need to be done.

2. Express yourself and your passions

Being confident in communicating with your peers, managers, customers or your network is a very important part of reinforcing Brand You. It's not something that comes naturally for everyone, myself included, but is something you should practice at every opportunity. Try to put yourself into situations that require you to speak about your views and passions; whether that be key meetings internally or speaking at external meetings or events and with new people you bring into your network. Remember to be consistent with your brand values and your vision statement. Plan in advance to ensure that you make the most of the opportunity and that you present yourself effectively.

3. Build influence with key stakeholders

Who are the key people who could influence your career for the better? Who could be an advocate for the Brand New Brand You? Understanding the answers to these two questions will help you understand where you need to exert effort in reinforcing Brand You. As long as you have identified the right people, building strong relationships with these individuals will have a positive impact on your career. Below I've highlighted some areas that you may want to spend some time thinking about before you engage with stakeholders.

- 🌱 Be patient. Building strong relationships and influence takes time and could take months or longer.
- 🌱 Be respectful. It is highly likely that the stakeholders you have identified are more senior than you and are likely to be extremely busy people. Be respectful of their time and position when making any requests of them.
- 🌱 Be committed to the stakeholders' success. By gaining an understanding of what is important to them professionally, you can then potentially support them in achievement of their objectives.
- 🌱 Be able to put yourself in their 'Shoes'. Often, concerns will not be vocalised, particularly if there's not yet a degree of trust in the relationship. Try and see the world from your stakeholders' perspective and anticipate how a particular stakeholder may respond to what you have to say. By addressing concerns from their perspective before they raise them you will start to build trust and will help you progress your ideas or proposals.
- 🌱 DELIVER (No apologies for mentioning 'Deliver' twice in this post!). Whatever you agree to do for or with your stakeholders, make sure you deliver against your promises. Nothing will hurt brand you more than non-delivery.

4. Join like-minded people.

A key way of building your network and Brand You is to join professional organisations. It is better to belong to fewer organisations and take an active role (board position or volunteer role) than to belong to many with superficial connections to the membership. Truly participating allows you to get to know people and build strong, enduring relationships.

If there isn't a professional organisation that feels right to you, create one. It can be a physical organization or a virtual one. Being the founder of the organisation gives you instant credibility with your entire membership and an opportunity to define and evolve it. And with the opportunity to build private social networking groups on the web, it's as easy as it is valuable.

5. Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to build professional relationships while contributing to the community. Take a volunteer position that allows you to use your strengths or develop new skills. Your network will grow along with your sense of fulfilment and accomplishment.

6. Continue to create and grow your online content

Earlier, I talked about contributing to industry forums, writing blogs or contributing to other blogs to create an online presence for the Brand New Brand You. Keep it up! Building an online following takes time and effort, but if you create strong content, it will start to build your credibility with your network and drive growth of your network.

7. Keep Networking

To be truly successful building Brand You, you need to be continuously making new connections while at the same time nurturing the relationships you have. Remember, if you take the attitude that it is about you, you will be less successful in retaining your network. But if you treat your network as a group of people you serve and support, your experience will be much more positive and you will attract what you need to be successful.

That concludes the fourth step in START.

Now I'll move onto the fifth and final step in the START process, Test.

starT - Test

So you've got to grips with Brand New, Brand You. You've developed your Brand – Your values and your Vision. You've started to build up your network of contacts and your personal brand with a wider audience. But what are people saying about your brand? Chances are, if you've been working with the STAR elements of START, people are talking about you and your brand already. How do you monitor these conversations both online and offline?

Online

Getting Started: How do people talk about you?

A good place to find how people know and speak about your brand is to look at the keywords and phrases they use to find your website. You can find these metrics in the analytics package you're using with your website. If you're not using an analytics package like Google Analytics, Webtrends or Clicky, then brainstorm keywords and phrases that you may have heard clients/customers use in discussions you have had with them. There are a large number of tools to choose from for monitoring Brand You and many are free to use. Here are a few free brand-monitoring tools that you may wish to try out.

Monitoring Tools

1: [Google Email Alert System](#)

You can sign up for Google Alerts quickly and easily. Using those keywords and phrases from your preliminary research, you can elect to have any instance of those keywords and phrases in combination with Brand You as Google finds them online sent straight to your inbox. Enter the topic you wish to monitor, then click Preview to see the type of results you'll receive. Anytime Google indexes any mention in search results of the alerts you're signed up for, you receive an email notification into your inbox. The notification is a direct hyperlink to the article, website, blog, product review, etc., wherein the keyword or phrase appeared.

2: [SocialMention](#)

SocialMention allows you to easily track and measure what people are saying about you across the web's social media landscape in real-time. SocialMention monitors 100+ social media properties directly, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Digg, Google, and many more.

It's straightforward and easy to use. You simply type the brand, product, service name or keywords/phrase into the search field, select where you would like to search the social sphere for the search term(s) you have entered and click the Search button. I recommend searching all of the categories, but if you're limited on time and resources, narrowing your search breadth and depth may be a good place to start.

SocialMention also provides the ability to narrow or broaden your brand monitoring as you like. Based on your search criteria, SocialMention will return all of the mentions of your brand or keyword/phrase across the web. Within the results, you'll be provided a number of statistics, not just the instances of brand/keyword mentions. Based on SocialMention's search metrics, they'll provide you sentiment ratings, top keywords used in conjunction with your brand, top users of your brand name (those mentioning it the most), strength, passion, reach and more. You're able to click on the links where your brand is mentioned which facilitates a direct response to the person or party mentioning your brand or keyword/phrase.

While these provided metrics are not completely scientific, they're a good reference point for understanding the nature of the types of conversations and comments surrounding your brand.

3: [TweetDeck](#)

To narrow down where you monitor your brand, TweetDeck offers you a simple way to view multiple conversations and searches from one location. You can use the dashboard in multiple locations such as laptop, desktop, smartphone and tablet.

TweetDeck is your personal real-time browser, connecting you with your contacts across Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and more. You can monitor your brand mentions as they happen and respond just as quickly! The power of TweetDeck and other similar dashboards like HootSuite is the ability to see tweets (conversations, comments, feedback) regarding your brand and keyword/phrases in real-time.

4: [Technorati](#)

To monitor the blogosphere for what bloggers are posting about your brand, I recommend Technorati. It's an online tool that searches a blog directory of nearly 1.3 million blogs for all mentions of the brand or keyword/phrases that you enter in the search field.

Technorati is the world's largest blog search engine and robust community blogging platform. When the search results are compiled, you have a listing of posts for perusal to again determine what kinds of product and service reviews, comments, feedback, stories and more are being shared regarding your brand. Using Technorati for monitoring your brand via blogs allows you to post comments and feedback on the blog posts. Yet another tool that permits you to join in the conversation about your brand.

The search results Technorati blog searches return can be a powerful tool in finding and building a network of blogger brand ambassadors. When you find your brand mentioned in a blog post, take the time to read it, and comment. If questions are raised about your brand on a blog post, feel free to answer the questions. Many bloggers who take the time to write about your brand will welcome your participation in the comments/conversation. Use these opportunities for involvement to build your network of brand ambassadors, as often these folks are some of your biggest fans and advocates!

5: [Klout](#)

Klout is tool used to measure and leverage your online influence based on your use of social media communication tools like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Foursquare, and Google+. Wherever you have an online presence, you have the opportunity to influence people by creating or sharing content that inspires actions such as likes, retweets, shares, comments and more. The more engagement your posts receive, the more influential you are. Tracking this influence overtime, allows you to understand your brand resonance further, and basically, highlights what you should continue you doing, and what you should refrain from exploring.

6: [Bit.ly](#)

Bit.ly is a URL shortener that tracks clicks to a URL you shorten, regardless of where you shorten it, and lets you see how many clicks that link received. It's also a good way for determine the engagement of your network, as well as the best times to post an article. For example, tweet a blog post at 8 a.m. with one bit.ly URL, then tweet it again with a different bit.ly URL at 1 p.m., and see which time gets you the most clicks. Do this a few times, and see if you can figure out what time of day is the best time to regularly publish your blog posts.

When deciding which online monitoring tools are best for your brand's needs, take into account all of these considerations: what, where, how and why you are monitoring. This will help you plan for and hopefully succeed in brand monitoring and give you a roadmap for how and where to participate in the conversations about your brand online.

Offline

In short, ask for feedback; from your manager, their manager, your peers and your customers. Seek feedback on a regular basis, especially after you have identified Brand You improvements or areas of focus. Exchanging information and perceptions is an iterative process, not a single event. You can do this relatively informally by just asking for feedback face to face outside of any structured one-to-ones with your manager, or you can use more formal mechanisms such as 360 degree feedback questionnaires and personality testing.

Receiving feedback is a gift that provides you with honest information about people's' perception of your behaviours and performance - Be open to what you will hear!

1: Face to Face Feedback

A Face to face meeting is a great way to get quick feedback about the Brand New, Brand You. I've listed below a few Do's and Don'ts for these types of feedback session.

Do's

- 🌱 Set-out to the person giving the feedback your reasons for wanting feedback and areas of Brand You that you would like feedback on, e.g. personal impact, quality of work, areas for improvement etc.
- 🌱 Encourage honest, straight talking and reassure the person that they don't need to hold back.
- 🌱 Let the person finish what he or she is saying. Really listen to what is being said, and often more importantly, not said.
- 🌱 Try to summarise the feedback at key points in the conversation, to ensure that you have listened effectively
- 🌱 Ask clarifying questions, if you're not sure what's being said and ask for specifics, if not provided.
- 🌱 Take the time after the feedback session to evaluate the information and consider specific actions for improvements.
- 🌱 Teach yourself to recognise situations in which a certain behaviour needs to be altered. Feedback can help you self-monitor your behaviour at times when you are less than optimally effective.
- 🌱 Use feedback to clarify goals, track progress toward those goals, and to improve the effectiveness of your behaviours over a period of time.

Don'ts:

- 🌱 Become defensive or explain your behaviour. (You can either spend your time defending your actions or you can spend your time listening)
- 🌱 Interrupt the other person, unless you need clarification.
- 🌱 Be afraid to allow pauses and periods of silence when you receive feedback. This gives you time to understand what is being said and it gives the other person time to think about what they say.

2: 360 Degree Feedback

360 Degree Feedback is a more formal system or process in which employees receive confidential, anonymous feedback from the people who work around them. This typically includes the employee's manager, peers, and direct reports. Typically a mixture of about eight to twelve people fill out an anonymous online feedback form that asks questions covering a broad range of workplace competencies. The feedback forms include questions that are measured on a rating scale and also ask raters to provide written comments. The person receiving feedback also fills out a self-rating survey that includes the same survey questions that others receive in their forms.

Generally, 360 feedback systems automatically tabulates the results and present them in a format that helps the feedback recipient create a development plan. Individual responses are always combined with responses from other people in the same rater category (e.g. peer, direct report) in order to preserve anonymity and to give the employee a clear picture of his/her greatest overall strengths and weaknesses.

360 Feedback can also be a useful development tool for people who are not in a management role. Strictly speaking, a "non-manager" 360 assessment is not measuring feedback from 360 degrees since there are no direct reports, but the same principles still apply. 360 Feedback for non-managers is useful to help people be more effective in their current roles, and also to help them understand what areas they should focus on if they want to move into a management role.

360 Feedback methods tend to measure the following areas of Brand You:

- 🌱 Behaviours and competencies
- 🌱 How others perceive an employee
- 🌱 Skills such as listening, planning, and goal-setting
- 🌱 Subjective areas such as teamwork, character, and leadership effectiveness

Most company HR Departments will be able to help you perform a 360 assessment, but there are tools such as Appraisal 360 available for you to purchase online, but these can be relatively expensive.

3: Personality Tests

There are numerous personality and psychometric tests available which measure a skills such as verbal, numerical, abstract or mechanical reasoning (these are often called aptitude tests) and questionnaires used to find out about your personality type, learning style or career choices, which can help you and / or an employer make informed choices. Tests are often used by employers to give an objective assessment of a people's abilities. They can also be used throughout your career to gauge areas for development.

There are plenty of management tools out there concerning personality types that you may wish to explore— Myers Briggs, DISC Strategy being the better ones in my experience.

That concludes the final step in START and the Brand New, Brand You series.

Good Luck!

