

The Office

Stand out from the crowd

In a competitive world, you need to make sure people remember who you are and what you do. **Penny Cotte** looks into personal branding

TODAY'S society is geared increasingly towards the individual, and that means you have to find ways to stand out from the crowd in order to compete. Developing your personal brand is one way.

Branding has moved a long way from simply building recognisable product names. Brands now stand for whole worlds of meaning. For example, Virgin is not just trains, records and planes; it's an attitude. It embodies the David and Goliath spirit of the little guy fighting big corporations. If you think about The Body Shop, Benetton and Budweiser you could write down several adjectives to describe the spirit of those organisations. In other words, brands stand for something these days. And that's just what you need to do if you want to be visible among the masses.

"We live in a competitive climate, not least in the world of work," says Helen Trevaskis, identity consultant for brand consultancy Smith and Milton. "Employers are not just looking for skills and qualifications, but for different qualities. More young people have degrees, and you'll find many other candidates with the same skills and qualifications as you."

According to Trevaskis, personal branding comprises three core elements:

- knowing what you are and what you offer
 - being able to present that in a memorable and forceful way
 - doing it naturally, making it more than just superficial.
- "You need to take a good look at yourself and ask fundamental questions," says Trevaskis, "such as, who am I? What sets me apart? What are my strengths and weaknesses?"

Trevaskis has just set up a specialist unit, The Insiders, to help firms communicate identities. "From the answers," she says, "decide where you want to position yourself in the world, and how you want others to see you."

Over time, by studying yourself and others, you can learn to create your own

brand identity to make yourself more memorable. It's a particularly useful exercise at times of change in your career. "I remember buying my first suit and behaving a bit more seriously when I no longer wanted to be 'the new girl' at work," says Trevaskis. "I didn't realise it, but I was starting to rebrand myself."

Mary Spillane, author of *Branding Yourself* and an expert in image and communications, points out that in today's fleeting, visual society you have only seconds to make your mark. "By having a strong brand, we can help people work out more quickly what we are," says Spillane. She recalls a recruitment experiment at

Toronto University, where interviewers compared thoughts on candidates after 15 seconds with those after 30 minutes, and found the two sets of impressions were scarcely similar. "But think what messages you get in 15 seconds," explains Spillane. "Handshake, looks, posture, voice, height, sex, race, education, confidence, fitness, eye contact, whether you're friendly ... It's a long list."

For Thomas Gad, who has 20 years' experience in brand strategy and advertising, personal branding is a central issue for all of us. "It's about identity and self-knowledge," says Gad, co-author with Anette Rosencreutz of *Managing Brand Me*, which is published today. "You need

a strong sense of personal identity to stand out from the crowd, to get the job you want, and the life you want," he says. Often we take a deeper look at ourselves only in times of crisis, but if we're prepared by already knowing what's important to us, says Gad, it makes difficult situations easier to handle.

"Personal branding is also important for women in business," adds Rosencreutz. "Too many women believe that to succeed they must act like a man, but if this is not their authentic leadership style, it won't work."

The book *Managing Brand Me* teaches you how to build your personal brand. Its three parts examine what you are now, what you would like to

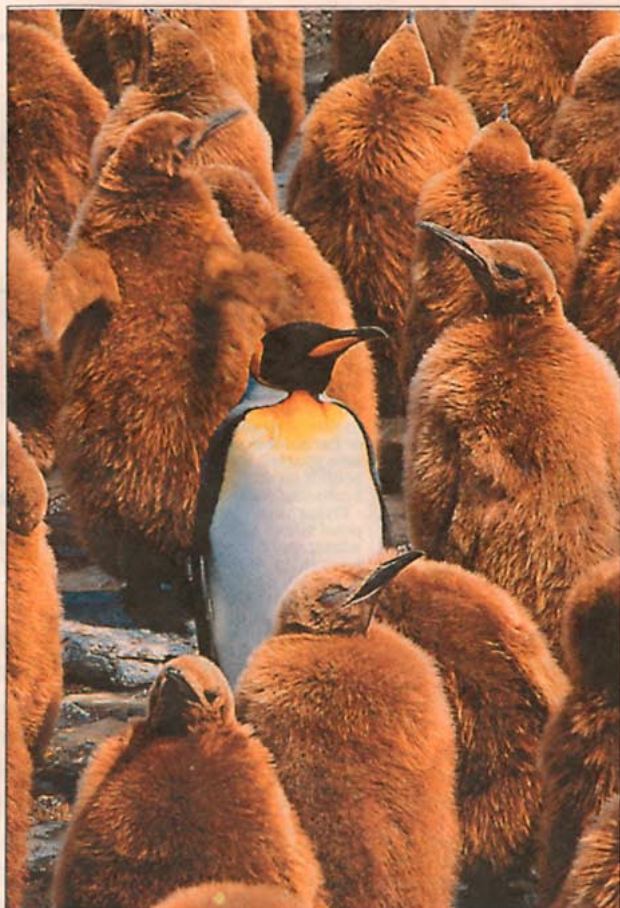


Photo: Tony Stone



Reader offer

Managing Brand Me, by Thomas Gad and Anette Rosencreutz, is published today (Momentum, £15). Just the Job has 20 copies to give away to PS readers. Simply send your name, address and daytime telephone number on a postcard to: PS/Brand Me, Room 226a, Evening Standard, Northcliffe House, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5EE by Wednesday 8 May. The first 20 postcards pulled out of the bag will each receive a copy of the book.

be and how to install this new conscious "you" into your subconscious. "It's a way to reprogramme yourself," explains Rosencreutz.

The idea is to develop yourself so you become more visible and easily remembered by people around you. You want to be at the front of their minds all the time and take up as much space in their mind as possible. Companies work hard to do the same, so when you're shopping you head straight for that particular brand. To start the process of becoming a strong, authentic brand, you need to develop equally in four dimensions:

- functional dimension (skills, competencies, benefits to others)
- social dimension (social competence, interaction with others)
- mental dimension (ability to develop yourself and others)
- spiritual dimension (seeing a larger perspective, connecting to issues in life).

If you become a complete four-dimensional person, says Gad and Rosencreutz, you will touch people in so many ways, you'll stay in their minds and take up a lot of their "mind space".

And this, after all, is the whole idea: to develop yourself into such a memorable brand, such a defined and authentic person, that you get yourself firmly on people's mental shopping lists. And stay there.

'The idea is to develop yourself so you become more visible and easily remembered'

Check out your personal branding potential

1 How do you react when you are criticised?

- A I listen carefully and consider whether it is relevant or not
- B I get disturbed and worry that people will lose faith in me
- C I'm grateful to get feedback so I can improve
- D I immediately think, "What is the real issue here?"

2 What's your ideal office?

- A My own room, where I can concentrate and do my best
- B An open office. I like to move around and talk to people
- C I like to have a space where I can think and create, but I also need to walk around and share my ideas with others
- D I don't care so much about the office, the main thing is what I do and that it's inspiring

3 How do you prepare yourself for a weekend trip?

- A I book hotel, restaurants etc well in advance, and make sure I have cash in the right currency
- B I check if something special is going on where I'm travelling. I call my friends who live there
- C The most important thing is

Having a strong personal brand means having a complete four-dimensional persona. This means that you stretch your brand evenly in the four dimensions. Complete this test and find out your Personal Branding Potential



that I can experience something new
D I don't make detailed plans in advance. I like to see where things take me

4 What is your perfect home?

- A A small, functional flat in the city centre
- B A nice big house where friends can stay over
- C A place that makes me feel good and harmonious
- D It's not important to me, as long as it's decent

5 What is the usual role you get in a team?

- A The researcher and organiser

B The networker who keeps the team together and team spirits up

- C The coach and strategist
- D The inventor and energizer, as long as the team has a mission you believe in

6 If a friend lets you down, how do you typically react?

- A I get disappointed and think it's unfair
- B I exclude that person from my network
- C I get hurt, but try to solve it with my friend
- D I prefer to see it in perspective; maybe my friend didn't let me down on purpose

How did you do?

Mostly As

The Functional Dimension is your strongest dimension. You are a productive person who gets things done. Competence and formal skills are very important to you.

Mostly Bs

The Social Dimension is your strongest dimension. Your social competence is good and you have a natural ability to communicate and liaise with people.

Mostly Cs

The Mental Dimension is your strongest dimension. You are

interested in developing yourself and you are good at it. You have a natural ability to give people insight and be a coach and leader.

Mostly Ds

The Spiritual Dimension is your strongest dimension. You have the ability to see things in a larger perspective. You feel driven by a higher purpose or issue to a much larger degree than the traditional professional does. In your professional life, you are an entrepreneur or visionary, if not a priest, social worker or artist.

If your answers are concentrated in one dimension

You are a one-dimensional brand and have tremendous potential to expand in other dimensions.

If your answers are concentrated in two or three dimensions

You are well on your way to building your personal brand. You can stretch your Brand Me Mind Space further and become a complete and stronger brand.

Even distribution across all four dimensions

You have a solid personal brand — you can keep on stretching it in all dimensions but do it one at a time to stay in focus.