

Why personal branding isn't entirely all about you

By: [Vanessa Bluen](#) | 3 Nov 2014 15:01

In the digitally enabled economy of today, connected and intelligent individuals face a world rife with competition when it comes to career advancement or even business survival. To stand out above the clutter as an individual, you need a newer, far reaching approach to building your personal influence and equity.

According to the 2014 Edelman Trust Barometer, only 17.5% of people around the globe said they trust their business and government leaders to solve social issues, correct issues within industries that are experiencing problems, make ethical and moral decisions, and tell the truth regardless of complexity or unpopularity. This is indicative of a world-wide trust dilemma, and coupled with a pressurised society demanding immediate value from us - we need to map a new way of standing out by offering additional value.

How do you set yourself apart and authentically connect with key stakeholders, whether it is a potential employer, client or investor?

In order to connect with distracted audiences, we need to challenge our thinking. We need to identify different kinds of value that will be relevant to others. We have to discover ways that we can add value through insights into our stakeholders businesses and industries.



Here are some fresh insights to consider when redesigning your personal brand as a sustainable platform for building trust and long-term connections:

1. Be the ignition, not the engine

To make a sustainable impact in business - and in life - start thinking about how you can connect and add value to others. It might seem counterintuitive, but to build your personal brand

as a dynamic, successful, go-to kind of person, your value needs outshine your ego. But connecting isn't about numbers, such as how many thousands of friends or followers you have on Facebook. It's the quality of your relationships that count and your ability to add value during each and every interaction. How can you be the ignition key to accelerate value and possibilities for others, rather than the big engine noisily seeking attention for yourself?

Although we think our power and influence comes from our professional knowledge and skill, like being a good lawyer, engineer or accountant, that's no longer enough. In this ultra-connected global

economy, those skills can be found anywhere, and probably at a lower price. Instead, our personal brands should embody our ability to engage with others and help them to succeed by understanding what *they* need and having a network of contacts to introduce to them.

2. Curiosity never killed the cat

Develop an appetite for curiosity. Expose yourself to international news - especially current and cutting edge articles within the field most relevant to your stakeholders. This creates a powerful foundation for adapting and connecting into others' agendas. To be a person of insight with the ability to have relevant business conversations and bring an alternative perspective to the table, is about making *their* agenda more important than yours!

Building global cultural fluency has become a critical skill to embody within our personal branding as we increasingly need to interact in more diverse contexts. This embodies understanding your own world view and appreciating and connecting into other people's cultural and social frameworks. On a more micro, personal level - we need to build flexibility to adapt and connect with others on a personal level i.e. if a person talks quickly, that is an indicator to swiftly get to the point. Ask questions that indicate you want to understand what they are trying to achieve at a personal, project and organisational level.

When writing to prospective stakeholders, clearly show how they will get value from meeting you by indicating the ideas you can contribute, which are focused on their issues rather than your own abilities. This can be expanded on by providing contacts with reports and research that will be useful in their world and may have little or even nothing to do with your professional skills.

3. A first impression sparks; a powerful perception lasts

55% of a first impression is visual, 38% is based on what you sound like and only 7% is built on what you actually say! Never underestimate the power of visual perception and ensure that the physical representation of your personal brand is consistent with your value offering. The ability to present an impactful business case and to hold your ground when faced with challenging responses is an important step to building a credible perception.

Self-confidence is a crucial component to connecting with others. Research has indicated that the degree to which others are able to connect with us is directly proportionate to how we feel about ourselves. And positive perceptions are primarily driven by our ability to be relevant and connect with others. Perhaps ask yourself - how much value have I left behind the mind of the other person?

Going forward

Today's business and economic climate has propelled the evolution and advancement of personal branding. As a result, a new and fresh approach to building personal impact and influence will have more shelf life and longevity than the traditional, self-orientated approaches to personal branding. Personal brands, if built with insight and bundled with far reaching value and authentic communication, will transcend many of the challenges that businesses and individuals face in a tough economic climate.

About Vanessa Bluen

Managing Director at The Consultant Powerhouse an integrative consultancy at the forefront of creating training and development practices that inspire new ways of thinking and relating to others, as a means of building relevance and trust in a distracted economy.

