

DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL BRAND FOR CAREER SUCCESS



Are you ready to transform your career? **Veronica Canning** shows how focusing on your personal brand can help you succeed.

Every December we promise ourselves that we will do better next year, we say we will change, we will aim higher, we plan our own version of global domination and yet most of us will continue to do the same things in slightly different ways while hoping for change. This, as we know, is the definition of madness. So, to break the repetitive behaviour, I want to give you the biggest challenge ever: *Why be good when you could be outstanding?*

I challenge you to transform your career by making the development of a powerful personal brand the cornerstone of your plan for 2014.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL BRAND?

Your personal brand is not what you say it is, it's what others say about you. My definition of a personal brand is: *What they say about you when you leave the room.*

Your personal brand is a definer of success in your career as it is the most visible marker of you and what you stand for. It offers you the chance to take control of what people say about you in the work setting

YOUR PERSONAL BRAND IS EITHER ACCIDENTAL OR PURPOSEFUL

Everyone has a personal brand; it is not something one can opt out of but the good news is that you can control whether your brand is 'purposeful' or 'accidental'.

“AS PEOPLE MOVE AWAY FROM HAVING A JOB FOR LIFE, AND MOVE TO HAVING A CAREER MADE UP OF DIFFERENT PARTS; JOBS, PERIODS OF TRANSITION, BREAKS FOR EDUCATION OR CHILD CARE AND, INCREASINGLY, PERIODS OF UNEMPLOYMENT, YOUR BRAND BECOMES YOUR MOST VALUABLE TRANSPORTABLE ASSET.”

What your personal brand looks and feels like is up to you. When you take control you can craft a purposeful brand that is authentic and an integral part of your career plan.

FOUR CORE TRUTHS ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Exploring your personal brand begins with these four truths:

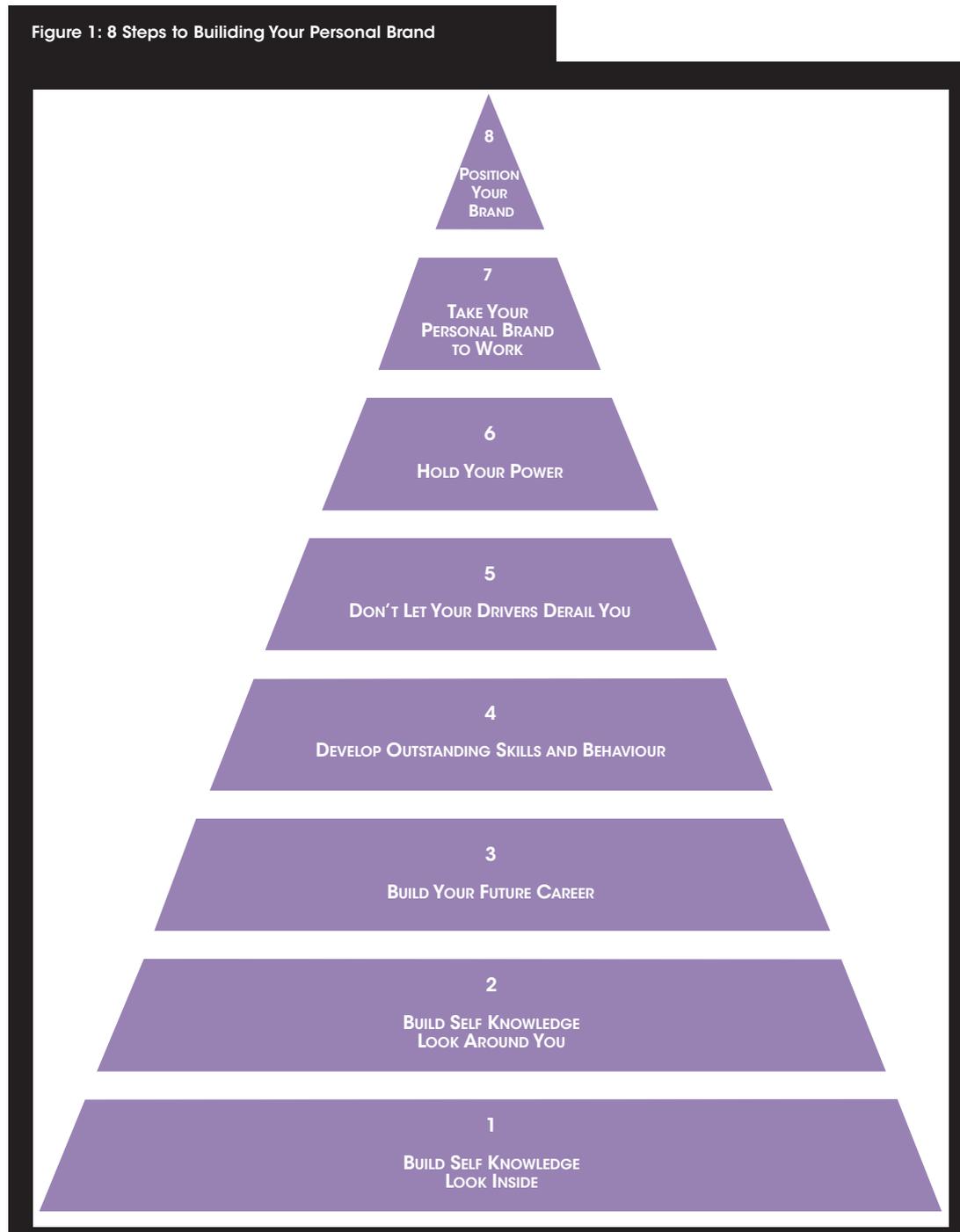
1. You are at the centre of your personal brand

You are at the centre of your personal brand. It is built on you and your values and played out by your behaviours. For it to succeed it must be authentic. You may think you can fake it; like the boss who asks everyone how they are and wants to look like they care but then ignores requests to take leave for important occasions. He fakes that he is a good people manager and cares about his staff but his deeds show that all he cares about is results.

2. You are in charge of your current and future personal brand

You create your brand daily, and you are totally responsible for it. Every action you take further defines it. It is vital that you realise that it is not an optional extra that you may get to later, but is a big part of you at this moment. Often, when I work with people who hate their job, they see the answer as leaving, to start afresh in a new

Figure 1: 8 Steps to Building Your Personal Brand



place. I always remind them that the unfortunate reality is that they take themselves with them to the new job. It is far too easy to blame everyone else when you are the problem.

3. Your personal brand is your single biggest transportable asset

As people move away from having a job for life, and move to having a career made up of

different parts; jobs, periods of transition, breaks for education or child care and, increasingly, periods of unemployment, your brand becomes your most valuable transportable asset. In an increasingly fluid workplace you are the only constant. You therefore need to concentrate on making yourself like a little enterprise, *You Inc* with unique skills, competencies and a personal brand.

4. Your personal brand is a vibrant, evolving part of you

While the core 'you' remains more or less the same, your confidence, experience, self-knowledge, projection and the extent of your fame changes. You will not have the same brand at all stages of your career – at least I hope you won't – but you will have a brand at every stage and as you learn from your mistakes will continuously adjust it.

BRANDS ARE EMOTIONAL

I notice that when people talk about brands they do so with emotion. Brands exploit your emotional engagement with the very idea of their brand. When pressed to explain this emotional attachment you find yourself starting off rationally and then you reach down to the emotion. You start saying things like “I love it”, “I like being seen in it”, or “I always buy it because I trust it”.

Now, take a step back from your favourite brands and stay in that mindset as you begin to look at your personal brand. You have this emotional effect on others! Your personal brand engages with those around you on an emotional level and can have a positive or a negative effect on people.

**HOW TO BUILD YOUR BRAND:
THE EIGHT STEPS**

It is easy to think that working hard will get you noticed and promoted. If only it were that easy. I know for certain that it won't. If you put the head down, work like crazy and hope the boss will notice and reward you are likely suffering from the ‘good worker syndrome’.

You need to understand what makes a noticeable personal brand before you set about building it. I believe everyone is capable of building a really purposeful, powerful personal brand and *Figure 1* above shows the road map to do so, but the key is developing the belief you can do it!

**STEP 1: BUILD SELF-
KNOWLEDGE: LOOK INSIDE**

The starting point in developing your personal brand is understanding yourself. Working to discover insights into your personality is the first step towards achieving an authentic personal brand.

Constant self-evaluation is important as you change jobs, roles, companies and teams because, as your role changes, you need to adapt. Some people are intransigent on this and insist that what you see is what you get. *My question for them is always: How is that working for you, then?* Embracing the uncomfortable reality that you may need to change is an important part of the process.

**STEP 2: BUILD SELF-
KNOWLEDGE: LOOK AROUND
YOU**

In Step 2 you look outside of yourself and get the perspective of others. This deepens

your self-knowledge and is a transforming exercise. Based on your insights you are then able to see clearly your personal strengths and successes. Having addressed the first two steps you can develop your personal brand statement.

**STEP 3: BUILD YOUR FUTURE
CAREER**

In taking this third step, the question you need to ask yourself is whether you have a clear idea of your career plan. It is not possible to build a personal brand in isolation from your work life. While you can adopt techniques to improve your personal brand, I believe that it works considerably better if done in real time in your real career.

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RECOGNISE ANY
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SERVED YOU WELL TO
DATE, BUT THAT MIGHT, IF
OVERPLAYED, DERAIL
YOUR PERSONAL
BRAND.”

**STEP 4: DEVELOP
OUTSTANDING SKILLS AND
BEHAVIOURS**

At the root of your personal brand lies your behaviour. It is by your actions that you are known. In this Step you look at the behaviours people see on a daily basis. Do you know how your everyday behaviour constantly feeds into the changing perception of you? Do you understand which of your behaviours has the potential to totally damage your personal brand?

**STEP 5: DON'T LET YOUR
DRIVERS DERAIL YOU**

Progressing further into your behaviour in Step 5, you decide if any of your personality drivers, that have delivered success to date, have (if overused), begun to derail you.

This moves your understanding of your behaviour to a new level, allowing you to recognise any behaviour that has served you well to date, but might, if overplayed, actually derail your personal brand.

STEP 6: HOLD YOUR POWER

Have you noticed how you can have a great personal brand and still have difficulty? It is as if you are damaging yourself by leaking your power to someone or something else.

Step 6 explains the concept of ‘leaking power’ and how it can damage you. You may discover that despite having developed a successful personal brand, you are leaking power in certain situations which is halting your further progress.

**STEP 7: TAKE YOUR PERSONAL
BRAND TO WORK**

The next step is to look at where you operate your personal brand, the corporate playing field, which I call the *matrix*. I recommend having an excellent understanding of the hierarchy in which you work. Do you know who has influence over your career? Do you have a good relationship with them? Do the right people know you exist, and are you influencing what they think of you?

I observe people studying how to manage people in their teams, but not enough attention is paid to the art of ‘managing up’. How good are you at that? It could be the most important part of succeeding in your career.

**STEP 8: POSITION YOUR
BRAND FOR THE FUTURE**

Finally, there is the realisation that you need to get out there and make yourself known. Are you working away in your silo and getting the job done with a shorter-term job view, or are you looking around you and taking a long-term career view? Do you network both in and out of the company? The workplace is too competitive to leave your career to chance; you need to proactively position yourself where the right people will see you shine.

Finally you need to integrate the steps and react to changing events in your career.

Veronica Canning is the author of 'Your Brand: Advance your Career by Building a Personal Brand which will be published by Chartered Accountants Ireland in 2013.
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