

Facilitating Business Results

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3 Steps to Powerful Personal Branding

Build your career by projecting
your unique passion



Have you noticed in the last decade how much more mobile, uncertain and fluid the workplace has become, with organisational changes increasing the number of short term project based work, the opportunities to build or wreck your reputation are surging.

Add in the shift in emphasis of career management from the company to you, a hyper competitive marketplace, and the rise in social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn mean it's a tough job to build a successful career.

As a result, many people end up becoming "commodities" in the talent marketplace. They are not enjoying their careers but suffering from low motivation. And if that wasn't bad enough, take a look below you. The next generation has absolutely no problem in promoting themselves.

So what are you going to do about it?

You need a personal brand. But what is that you may ask. You'll understand after reading the rest of this article. In "Be your Own Brand", McNally and Speak define a personal brand as "a perception or emotion that somebody has, that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you." In other words, we all have a brand and it's what people are saying about us. Do you know what people say about you? Are you the driven career woman, the nice guy or the angry manager?

A good way of thinking about your personal brand is to "become more of who you are". So how do you do that? In short, you need to project your unique passion. Let's take a look at this in more detail.

Warwick John Fahy facilitates business results with TEAMSWORK. We help retain and develop talent in cross cultural teams in multinational companies in China, Asia and the Middle East.

1. Find your Passion

Let's begin with passion. When it comes to career, most people would rather be doing something else. How many people do you know are really passionate about their work? I have asked many people the question, "What would you do with your life today if you did not need to work for money?" You'd be surprised how few say they would keep on working 12 hours a day in their current job.

But we do have a long list of things that we would like to do, be or have. Our passions, our hobbies and interests. We justify the hard work of today with the belief that sometime in the future we will be able to enjoy our passions. That's not a good idea because early retirement is a killer. A British Medical Journal research study, carried out over 26 years, found that the mortality rate among early retirees was almost twice as high in the first ten years after retirement, with men more likely to die at a young age than women.

The one thing that reversed this trend? A healthy active lifestyle. Leonardo da Vinci stayed creative his whole life. He didn't retire. Tim Ferriss in the 4-Hour Workweek calls for mini-retirements. Start living your passions today, don't wait. Here is a way to find out what makes you tick:

First, write down all you the things that make you enthusiastic, and give you energy. Think back to the things you loved to do as a child.

Second, cross off items that only relate to personal gain (shopping for another handbag) and that do not have any productive outcomes (watching TV alone).



Finally, go through your list and circle any items that you would be willing to do even if you won't get paid for it. When you read through the list, ask yourself how much time are you investing in your passions today? How can you start increasing this time?

A friend of mine, working in the auto industry, has a passion for fussball (table football). He shifted from playing fussball in bars (fun but relatively unproductive) to organising a fussball league. Then he moved onto training youth to play fussball, he found sponsors to buy tables and training facilities. Finally, he was even consulted by the national fussball association on how to develop the game. That's how to turn a passion into something much much bigger!

Find a way to work these into your current day job. Take some time at the weekend or evening to learn more, join a club or teach other people about your interests. The more you work with your passions, the more you are becoming the real you.

2. Unique Value

Now we know our passions, we need to work on becoming unique. Seems a tough one. What's so special about me? Well each of us has a unique value that we can offer others. How can we understand what this uniqueness is? We must first define our expertise more broadly than our job description.

What do people usually invite you to come and do? Are you the first choice to host the annual party? Would your friends pick up the phone when they needed a good restaurant recommen-

dation? This will give you a clue about where other people view your expertise. Remember that a personal brand is how other people perceive you, not how you would like to be seen.

Try this exercise to get new insights on the value you provide. Ask yourself the question, "**What pain do I solve?**"

Write between 20 and 100 small pains or problems you solve. In other words, what services do you offer the people around you? Include both paid and unpaid services. Include family, friends, and colleagues. You may need to ask people close to you to help dig out your value. When I did this exercise, I was told that I was an excellent meeting facilitator and organiser. I had forgotten to include this as I had taken this for granted.

So now we have defined our passions and the unique value that we provide. The next step in personal branding is how to project them.

3. Project your Unique Passion

Have you ever stopped to think, "**What image am I projecting?**" Most people haven't. While it's easy to have an opinion on how others should look and behave, it's a lot tougher to apply that same thinking to ourselves.

Are my actions in tune with my personal brand? If you mentioned that "learning" was a key passion for you, but you haven't picked up a new skill in five years, you are not projecting the personal brand that you desire. You may desire a fast track career and promotion, but is your personal hygiene and dress sense in tune with a high powered executive?

Are you able to articulate your personal brand?

Since the days of Dale Carnegie, one skill which every man, woman and child should learn is the art of effective public speaking. The ability to stand up in front of others and express yourself clearly and with purpose is invaluable in both your career and family life. Find opportunities to speak with people about your passion. Volunteer to start an interest group in your company or community. Start to become known for your passion. The more you speak about it, the quicker this will become a reality.

Today we looked at the importance of building a personal brand. First, we got in touch with our passions as they are the foundation for becoming the real you. Then, we worked on identifying the ways that we provide unique value. The more we integrate our passion and our unique value, the clearer our personal brand becomes. Finally, we touched on a couple of ways to project an articulate brand image.

Warwick John Fahy is an expert in the art of confident public speaking. You can subscribe to his free weekly newsletter "52 Tips to more Confident Public Speaking" at www.warwickjohnfahy.com

