

**Brand You is important for one very powerful reason – YOU!**

**Brand You** – i.e. your *‘personal brand’* – is about how You want to be seen by the world. ‘Personal branding’ is what we use to show that we are different to others – it is what makes us stand out.

**Why personal branding?**

*Personal branding* is about much more than a CV or résumé. It is everything about us – from our ‘online’ presence, to who we are ‘in person’. At the very least, our *personal brand* is our reputation amongst our connections and our colleagues.

In this highly connected world that we live in, anyone wanting to know about us can easily find multiple sources of information, especially from social media. This can obviously affect anything and everything that we want to do.

Developing **Brand You** is at the core of our personal marketing strategy. Creating a meaningful *personal brand* is the best way to start differentiating ourselves from the pack.

Whether we are operating our own business, or working for someone else, our *personal brand* can be the key that gives someone a reason to connect with us. That might be so that they can buy from us, hire us, or employ us. In whatever we do, our *personal brand* will govern our career success.

For that reason, we cannot afford to let our *personal brand* just ‘happen’. We need to be proactive; we need to take control; we need to ensure that our *personal brand* is an asset, and not a liability.



Our personal brand includes our online profile

**Note:**

*Branding* is what we are, in every sense – it is what people think of when they hear or see our name.

*Marketing* is taking what we offer to our prospective customers – it is about getting their attention.

*Selling* follows from successful marketing – our prospect now becomes a connected customer!

**About marketing**

Now, we all know something about marketing. We are constantly barraged by advertisements, encouraging us to buy ‘stuff’! There are Ads on our mobile phones, on social media, on television, on radio, on bill boards in the street, on motor vehicles, in magazines and newspapers, in shop windows, on supermarket shelves, ... in fact, anywhere and everywhere!

Statistically, most advertisements have a very low conversion rate – we ‘see’ hundreds of Ads every day, but few of them cause us to buy. Much of the marketing that we see is very ‘forgettable’, some can

be ‘eye-catching’, and once in a while we may come across a piece that is quite ‘memorable’.

Even the marketing that we do ‘take in’ may not result in us buying – that usually depends on whether we have a ‘need’. When we do have a need for something, marketing may play a part in our decision of what to buy (as might: budget, features, friend’s recommendations, our previous experience, and even ‘expert’ reviews).

**Marketing Brand You**

**Brand You** allows us to market our qualities, aimed at bringing a potential client, employer, or recruiter to connect with us. For this marketing to work, our *personal brand* must offer that special something that makes us ‘eye-catching’, or even better, ‘memorable’.

But catching someone’s attention is not enough. Our **Brand You** must compel them to take the next step – it must convince them that we are worthy of their investment. We must be able to demonstrate that we have what they are looking for to satisfy their ‘need’ (hire, employ, contract, etc.).

A most important element here is authenticity. We must be real, genuine, credible, trustworthy. There is no scope for ‘window-dressing’ in **Brand You**. This means that we may even need to let our flaws be seen – anyone who appears to be perfect is likely to be considered “too good to be true!”

We need to showcase the various characteristics (talents, skills, passions) that set us apart and make us stand out from any competitors, and even from our colleagues. And that is what **Brand You** is all about – presenting you (and me) in the best way possible. Our personal brand is something to be cherished, nurtured, developed, and protected!

## A bit of history about Brand You

In August 1997, the Tom Peters article "[The Brand Called You](#)" appeared in Fast Company Magazine. The key point was that each one of us needs to take responsibility for promoting ourselves – we need to be in control of our own careers.

He also argued that when individuals like You and I take charge of our own marketing, we can have more flexibility about how we develop our career. Almost 20 years ago, this was seen by many to be a very Gen X thing to do, fitting in with their supposed 'what's in it for me' characteristic.

In June 2004 Tom was back with another Fast Company article: "[Brand You Survival Kit](#)". This time his message was that **personal branding** was about survival. He said: "*In the new frontier (of jobs), the only way to protect yourself is to realize that you have to be the boss of your own show.*" He also said that we need to regularly "**reinvent**" ourselves.

After that article, others started to take up the message about personal branding. One of the leading proponents of "reinventing you" in recent times has been Dorie Clark, an adjunct professor for Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, and the author of the book "[Reinventing You: Define Your Brand, Imagine Your Future](#)" (2012).

**Personal branding** is still very much in vogue today:

- a recent [New Yorker article](#) (Sep 04, 2013) includes the following statement: "*You already have a **personal brand**, whether you know it or not.... The question is, are you going to manage it or not?*"
- a recent [Canadian Financial Post article](#) (Oct 04, 2013) carries the headline "*Your **personal brand** online is part of the hiring process whether you like it or not*"

## "Building the New You"

Whether we call it 'Brand You', 'personal branding', 'Reinventing You', or "**Building the New You**" (the term that I use), the important thing is that we need to regularly refresh ourselves. From Tom Peters' original Fast Company article, which is still as valid today as when it was published, I have gleaned the following six-step approach:

### 1. Identify your distinctive qualities.

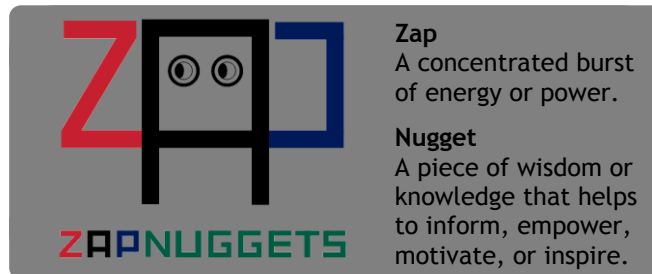
These are the characteristics that make us different from our competitors and our colleagues. What is our greatest strength; what makes us stand out in the crowd; what are we rightfully proud of?

### 2. What do you want to be known for?

Or, to put it in Tom's language – what do we want to be famous for? Tom suggests that we should write ourselves a mission statement to guide us – and we should review the mission statement every six months.

### 3. Branding campaigns require visibility.

Tom offers some ideas for gaining visibility, including: taking on extra tasks at work, freelancing work, community volunteering, writing columns (or blogs), and networking, which he calls "word-of-mouth marketing".



**Zap**  
A concentrated burst of energy or power.

**Nugget**  
A piece of wisdom or knowledge that helps to inform, empower, motivate, or inspire.

### 4. Be authentic, be consistent.

When we are working on increasing our personal visibility, we need to be authentic and consistent in everything we do, say and write. Everything, just everything, matters. This is the 'real' US! Tom also makes the point that we need to be loyal to our colleagues, our team, our customers, and ourselves.

### 5. Rewrite (and update) your résumé.

Actually, Tom's idea is that we turn this into a marketing brochure! Another radical idea is that rather than describing our job experiences, we describe our projects; these will highlight our skills, experiences, and achievements. To me, this sounds a lot like [LinkedIn](#).

### 6. Reinvent yourself regularly.

We need to be constantly learning new skills – and we need to become the 'master' of something. Tom also suggests that as we take charge of our career development, we look for experiences where we learn new skills and capabilities, grow our connections, and keep reinventing ourselves.

Some of Tom's ideas were pretty radical back in 1997, and some still are today. I love it! I will bring another Post on Building the New You shortly.

Meanwhile, enjoy a couple of Tom Peters' videos on Brand You (published 2009):

[Brand You: First Impressions](#) (2min:28secs)

[More on Brand You](#) (3min:08secs)

### Coming next:

Employee engagement and Workplace politics

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