SERGIUSZ TRZECIAK



PERSONAL BRANDING for Leaders

Reach for tried and tested strategies, techniques and tools
to help you build a consistent and genuine personal brand.

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Personal branding for leaders

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Introduction

In his book *Life After Life* Raymond A. Moody, MD describes over one hundred cases of people who had experienced clinical death[1]. Some of them saw a tunnel with a light at the end, others had an impression that they had left their bodies or floated over them, and others saw their lives flashing before their eyes. Facing death, those people remembered special moments or they observed them as if they were mere by-standers before "returning" to their bodies. This experience changed their lives. I remember that when I was a child, my mother read Moody's book and told me stories from it. This spurred my imagination so much that I imagined leaving my body and looking at myself from afar. As a child, I liked imaginative games.

Paradoxically, thinking about death forces us to think about life. Several times in my life I have had close encounters with death or barely escaped serious injury. The last such experience happened several years ago when I almost got hit by a speeding bus. In such situations, a thought crosses your mind: "What would I leave behind?", "What will they say at my funeral?", "What will be the inscription on my gravestone say?" Must we really have a face-to-face encounter with death to look at ourselves in a detached manner? Perhaps it would be a good idea to evaluate our lives not on the deathbed but here and now?

Just think for a moment how you would feel if you could leave your body. Which scenes from your life would you see right now? Which memories? Who are you? Do you see yourself as others see you? What picture of yourself are you painting in your mind?

Why did I write this book? Several years ago I gave an interview to a newspaper in which I talked about my scholarship at the University of Oxford. The title of the interview was: *I don't participate in the rat race*. And that is

[1] R. A. Moody, *Life After Life: The Investigation of a Phenomenon – Survival of Bodily Death*, March 2001

true - I have never taken part in it, I am not doing it now, and I do not ever intend to. However, my first job was managing one of the most important Polish think-tanks - the Sobieski Institute. Although many people considered this an important position, I never had things done for me and I did not get this post through any special connections. I created my first job myself - I organised the work of the Institute with a group of young and very talented people. We started with a virtual platform of experts, which we had created earlier. Then we opened an office and built an organisational team, acquired new experts and funding, and carried out ever larger projects, which in turn gave the Institute strong organisational and technical foundations. I worked with passion and determination, not to be in the rat race but for fun. After almost two years of working there, I decided that I wanted to move on and do something else. I felt that I had accomplished my mission and it was time to close that chapter of my life and find another challenge. I left to work on a project with a different establishment that better suited my interests. I found an organisation where everything was prepared for me by its generous sponsor: office, tools, contacts, a well-paid team, and an attractive salary. But, unlike in my previous job, I did not have an opportunity to fully develop my potential. Still, I value those two professional experiences greatly because they taught me a lot.

Today I know that work should also be your passion, a source of fun, and a learning process. I truly believe in such sayings as: "Do what you love and money will come to you" or "Don't work for money".

Lecturing university students, writing books, teaching courses (especially in foreign countries and cultures), coaching, as well as running my own PR consultancy are activities that give me great satisfaction; I certainly do not see it as a necessary evil, but as an opportunity to learn and develop. Learning and development is the essence of my life.

In this book, I show that a career is not only work, but also a passion. I will show you how to build a dream career and how to use it for personal development and for building a strong personal brand. I would like to be your advisor and coach, who will share his knowledge with you and by means of practical exercises, will help you achieve the aforementioned goals. Although this book is not literally about coaching or mentoring, I would like you to treat it as your personal coach and mentor for your personal brand.

This book will also show you that your passion, strong focus on development, and consistent striving to achieve goals can make you a leader.

Regardless of whether you are a tough leader type or not, or whether you are a shy introvert, you can become a leader. Introverts are great listeners and are good at maintaining relationships, which is one of the important attributes of a true leader. Born leaders are a myth, being a leader is just a status to be achieved. Everyone who wants to become one can do so. They can find a dream career and profession – a job where they will work with passion, a job in which the money they earn will not be an end in itself, but a desirable side effect.

This is not an easy path, because I am not going to write about how you can manipulate others by creating an artificial image of a person you are not. I will not show you as a product with a nice package design to be sold at the highest price. The purpose of this book is to encourage you to climb the ladder of knowledge and skills, to discover and define your own values and goals, to give meaning to your actions, and finally to find balance and happiness in life. The real personal brand is not only about outward appearance. Its essence is development that at first will be noticeable only to you and then later to others. Remember that the work on your personal brand starts inside you, so that your rich personality may radiate outside and make others see you in the best light possible. To be positively perceived by those around you is not an end in itself but a desirable result of your personal development.

Each of us needs motivation and encouragement, but also reflection. We need to ask the right questions concerning our goals, development, meaning in life, and the work we do. It would be ideal to ask an experienced specialist for help, but if this is impossible or you need more support, this book may serve as your personal coach. Of course, it will not replace him or her fully, but if you read it actively, if you do the exercises I suggest, expand your knowledge by reading other books, and if you write down your personal brand strategy, you will stand a better chance of using it effectively. Do the exercises, remember that unused knowledge is useless, so go ahead and use my book to design the strategy of your personal brand.

In this book, I will help you plan the strategy of your authentic personal brand that is compatible with your values. If you ask yourself why you should read it, I will answer right away: not to learn how to use some tools or tricks or to make a good impression, but to develop the entire strategy for creating your personal brand and give meaning to your life. This book is a road map that tells you how to do it, though it does not offer a shortcut like “make a meteoric career” or “create a new personal brand in a week”.

Neither do I promise that your new career and personal brand will bring you millions of dollars every year. I am giving you the map, but you will have to make the journey yourself.

How was this book written? I have been interested in the subjects of leadership, personal development, social psychology, management, and marketing for a number of years. So far, I have written nine books (in Polish and English). Over the past few years I have read and listened to the recordings of several hundred books. Inspired by some of them, I developed my own model for creating a personal brand, which was then verified by numerous people, I was helped by students from Executive MBA and Executive DBA courses, managers from the PwC Academy, I have conducted numerous training courses for the biggest Polish and international companies and I have worked closely with my clients including well-known political and business leaders in Poland. I have taught courses and given presentations on personal branding for various groups: students, businessmen, social and business innovators, local and foreign MPs, local government leaders, mayors and those who later turned out to be elected as Presidents of countries or became Prime Ministers. Those people, from over a dozen different countries, represented various backgrounds and cultures. I had an opportunity to observe their reactions, and to listen to their feedback. There was some criticism, which I humbly accepted, but many of them assured me that the knowledge, skills, and inspiration I had given them had proved helpful in their careers, had improved their performance, or had even helped them to verify the choices they made in their professional lives. So I wrote this book hoping that I could help you to attain your goals as well, thus fulfilling my motto: "Your goals. My passion."

Who is this book for? For those who have a certain state of mind. For people who see life as a chance for continuous development, self-improvement, and a constant learning process. For these people, their personal brand is not an end in itself, but a result of their personal development and acquisition of leadership skills. This book may therefore prove helpful to various people, including those who have just started their professional careers (secondary school and university graduates) as well as experienced professionals and managers. I particularly recommend it to consultants, teachers, coaches, experts, scientists, lawyers, doctors, PR specialists, journalists, and freelancers. I think it should be read by everyone who wants to become a leader in business, science, NGOs, administration and politics. This book is for all those who want to develop their leader mindset.

How should this book be read? I suggest that if you can, you should read it at least three times. The first time to gain knowledge, the second time to use this knowledge, and the third time to share the ideas from the book with others. Maybe you would like to give it to somebody close to you, to your subordinates or your boss, if you wish him/her well, of course.

You can read this book on three levels, which I could compare to swimming. The first level is like a community pool where you will find a lot of knowledge and practical advice. The second level is like a lake where you can dive so that you can find true motivation to do something. The third level is like an ocean where you will find deep inspiration and reflection on your values, where you will rediscover yourself, or perhaps change your life choices.

Each level offers a number of advantages. You can also choose the level – the pool, the lake or the ocean. Write to me if you get to the deepest level – well, write to me too if you have only splashed in the pool. I would love to find out how you swam. After all, as Francis Bacon claimed, knowledge is power and we have as much power as we have knowledge.

Write to me at *sergiusz@trzeciak.pl* – I am waiting for your correspondance.

How to use this book effectively.

The problem with most guidebooks is that they stop at the first level of knowledge and practical advice. This means that the book is a good read and you receive doses of inspiration as you read but you do not apply the knowledge you receive. Why does that happen?

The key is exactly the question "Why?" Instead of asking "What?" and "How?" one should start with the question "Why?" or "What for?" If I answer these questions, if I find the reasons and become aware of why I want something, why I take certain actions, it will boost my motivation. In his book *Instant Influence,* Michael Pantalon describes a method that will motivate you in six steps[2].

I suggest that we modify this method and ask ourselves six questions about our personal brand and career.

What motivates you to build your personal brand and develop your career?

[2] M. Pantalon, Instant Influence: How to Get Anyone to Do Anything--Fast, May 9, 2011

Are you ready for changes? Circle the level of readiness on the scale below, from 1 (not ready at all) to 10 (fully ready).
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Why did you not choose a higher number? If you marked 1, what would have to happen for you to move from 1 to 2?

Imagine that you have created your personal brand and made your dream career. Write down the positive results of that change.

Why do you want to build a personal brand and develop your career?

What is the next step on the way to building your personal brand (if there is one)?

I will make it easier for you to answer the last question and say that the next step is reading this book carefully.

I assume that when you answer these questions before reading the book, it will increase your motivation to apply the knowledge and skills that you obtain.

Acknowledgements

Writing a book can be a lonely experience, and it would not be possible for me to have done it without people who support me and who provide advice and assistance.

First, I would like to thank all those who inspired me or read the draft and shared their opinions. So, many thanks go to, Tomasz Chmal, Krzysztof Daniewski, Marek Dietl, Bernard Fruga, Klara Janiec, Jerzy Kołodziej, Jan Krzewiński, Adrian Palma, Zbigniew Pełczyński, Grzegorz Pytel, Bartłomiej Rajchert, Artur Roger, Adam Sikorski, Tomasz Trzeciak, Grzegorz Turniak, Dominika Wojeńska, Cezary Wójcik, Rafał Zakrzewski, and Agnieszka Zbierańska. I am very grateful to my father Wiesław Trzeciak for keeping me motivated to write and publish books. I apologise if I missed someone out here.

I would like to thank my students from the Executive MBA and Executive DBA courses (the Polish and international group) at the Polish Academy of Science, Manager Academy students from WSB Universities in Bydgoszcz and Toruń, the participants in the PwC Academy, and also my clients. However, my special gratitude goes to Andrzej Jacaszek, the publisher of Harvard Business Review Poland.

Special thanks also go to Agnieszka Caryk, Volha Damarad and Chris Whyatt who helped me greatly during the final editing of this book. Working with you was a great pleasure!

I would also like to thank my family. Since my work is also my passion and it has a special character, I apologise that sometimes there has been no distinction between my work time and family time. I would like to thank my wife Hania, my daughter Ola, my parents and in-laws for their support, inspiration and motivation.

Finally, I would like to thank my readers, because you give the meaning to what I do.

What you will learn in this chapter:

- what a personal brand is
- why you might need a personal brand
- what makes a personal brand different from a personal image
- what rules you should follow while building your personal brand
- why self-cognition is necessary for building your personal brand
- how to use professional self-cognition tools

CHAPTER 1

Fragrance

THE SCENT OF YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Imagine that you want to find a fragrance that suits you. You go to a perfume shop and sample various brands. After the tenth one, you have no idea which perfume you like best. Slowly you lose patience and decide on taking perfume X - maybe just because it is within your reach, maybe because someone you know uses it. You begin to use it, but you are not sure why you bought this one exactly and if it really suits you.

Sometimes you need to go to a perfume shop several times to choose the right fragrance. You may also decide that you do not need one but several brands of perfume. You will use one fragrance during the day, another for exercise, and the third for the evening - perhaps that is why one manufacturer offers products with names like *active*, *sport* or *night*. With time, you become more mature and gain more experience and finally the time comes when you want to change your fragrance again. If you do not believe that, go to a perfume shop and see for yourself that there are some fragrances advertised specifically for either teenagers, mature or older people. You may change the type or even the brand of perfumes, all that in order to use a fragrance that suits you at a relevant time.

A career is a lot like a fragrance. Sometimes the choice of the right career, or vocation if you prefer, may take many years - which does not mean that those years are wasted.

I write this as a lawyer who defended two master's theses in international public law, who successfully studied at several prestigious universities, and

really did a lot of different things in life to find "the right fragrance". However, sooner or later you will also have to choose the fragrance which suits you.

Ever more frequently the choice of career path is not a one-time event, but is only a stage in your development; you should be prepared for change. Sometimes a career must be arranged in such a way that one can follow two parallel paths, e.g. by being employed and simultaneously running one's own business, teaching at a university, teaching courses, or providing some other services. Regardless of what you do, you must remember that you build a brand that is *you*.

No matter which "fragrance" you choose, you need to know yourself very well in order to find the "right" one - and that is what this chapter is about.

1.1. What is a personal brand?

The notion of a personal brand can be defined on two levels. Usually the meaning of this term is narrowed to that of a personal image and the perception of a given person by their environment. This is, however, an oversimplification, because a personal image is not really the aim of building a personal brand, but rather the consequence of that process.

The first defining level of a personal brand is how people perceive you. It is not about who you are, but how others see you. This perception can be determined by a number of factors registered by each of the senses: your physical appearance, your clothing (street market vs. recognised brand or designer clothes), your smell (a natural smell of sweat vs. a good eau de toilette), your handshake (a firm or weak grip), which books you read (*50 Shades of Grey* vs. *War and Peace*), how you express yourself (a vocabulary range of a 4-year-old vs. that of a doctor of philosophy), your education (a basic vocational school for car mechanics vs. a renowned university). Obviously, those are only a few consciously exaggerated examples of the factors that constitute your personal brand. In reality, you are evaluated with all senses.

Imagine that you meet a two-metre-tall, tanned, muscular man wearing a gold chain, a tracksuit and sneakers, smelling of strong perfume, who is just getting out of a black BMW. Would you consider such a person a potential business partner? A cynic would probably say that it depends on the business.

Of course, you might say that it is unjust that people resort to stereotypes or judge by appearances, but these are the rules of the game. If you want to play, you must learn the rules and then play better than anyone else.

The second defining level of a personal brand is how it distinguishes you from other people. The source of difference can be intangible factors, such as personality or education, or tangible ones - outward appearance and accessories (the latter are particularly important for public figures, in the world of politics or show business). Just think how many people consciously want to distinguish themselves from others through an unusual appearance, hairstyle or accessories. Of course, one can claim that these are cheap tricks, but they are, nevertheless, effective as most people are influenced by them.

Such tricks are often used in show business - e.g. Lady Gaga's or Marylin Manson's haircut and clothes. People may also use parts of their body as distinctive features. Good examples might be Jennifer Lopez's bottom (allegedly insured for many millions of dollars), Pamela Anderson's breasts (although they are the work of a plastic surgeon), John Travolta's chin (apparently natural, although in Hollywood "natural" may have a different meaning). The public image of famous sportspeople is often connected with their sports clothes and equipment, e.g. Tiger Wood's golf club (before the scandals which engulfed him it was a perfect example of building a personal brand) or Michael Jordan's clothes and basketball.

Luckily, one's personal brand is not only based on appearance and accessories, but also on an idea or message. This, however, is only achieved by a few who enjoy immense respect. Mahatma Gandhi, John Paul II, or the Dalai Lama devoted their lives to the idea of peace, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela fought against racism, the fully paralysed physicist Stephen Hawking was known for his extraordinary mind that triumphed over his disability. Each one of us can find a feature that distinguishes us from others. Sometimes, initially, it may appear to be a weakness, e.g. a foreign accent when somebody speaks English. If such a person works in an English speaking environment, it might be a flaw and a source of complexes, but you can convert it into a distinctive, positive feature.

The personal brand of a physically challenged person

I would like to write a little bit more about this issue. A lot of people wonder if it is possible to build a personal brand in spite of disability. I believe it is possible. The proof may lie in the above-mentioned example: Stephen Hawking, who despite being paralysed worked as a scientist and gave lectures all around the world. Janina Ochojska, a famous Polish humanitarian activist who suffers from poliomyelitis, disproves any abhorrent opinion that a disabled person is reliant upon help provided by the state. Once a disabled politician asked me if it would be a good idea to have a photo taken

of him while he was sitting in a wheelchair. I said that it certainly would. A disabled politician breaks the stereotype that a disabled person is passive, this distinguishes him/her from other politicians.

Someone might ask: "And what if you are not a star or a renowned politician? What if you do not have great knowledge, money or other tools that might help you build your personal brand?" I would say that each of us is perceived by others in a certain way, even if we are not aware of it. The trick is to transform that image into a well-founded personal brand that is authentic and consistent. There are people who are not stars, but they are very good at projecting their brand.

Beata's personal brand

There have been several receptionists in the building where I live, but there was one who everyone was particularly fond of. Her name was Beata and her personal brand was that she would always smile and be polite, friendly as well as empathetic. She seemed to like everyone, but was particularly nice towards children, she remembered their names and ages and gave them small gifts. Many people who visited me used to say: "You have a really nice receptionist here" or "Your receptionist really seems to enjoy her work a lot". I often caught myself wondering who was sitting at the reception desk on that particular day, and realised that I was, in fact, waiting for Beata's kind words and smile that I knew would immediately make me feel better. Beata was a perfect example of a person with a very high level of emotional intelligence[1].

Unfortunately, the housing cooperative decided to terminate the contract with the security company which employed the receptionists. As a result, Beata told me that she was afraid of losing her job. I immediately suggested that I would write to her employer and emphasise how good a receptionist she was. The same day I received an answer from the chairman of the company who assured me that he valued such employees as Beata, and that he had no intention of dismissing her. The point is, however, that Beata did not even have to ask me to intervene on her behalf - I simply felt the natural need to praise her work ethic. It is worth mentioning that a few weeks after the release of the Polish version of this book, I got an e-mail from one of the readers. She said she knows where Beata works and that she recognised her based on the description of her personal brand.

Many people take a narrow view of the idea of a personal brand and consider it to be only cheap self-promotion utilising several tricks, such as "how

[1] D. Goleman, Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ, 2005; M. Goldsmith, Mojo: How to Get It, How to Keep It, How to Get It Back If You Lose It, 2010

to wave your hands to influence your recipients". Many charlatans teach courses and sell books based on effective manipulation techniques. Those people only repeat what they learnt in other courses that had little to do with reliable scientific knowledge or real-world experience. Their purpose is to make a one-time impression, which means that they do not really understand the notion of a personal brand.

It should be emphasised that building your personal brand is a conscious, consistent, and internally cohesive process which gives you an opportunity to develop and distinguish yourself from others in a positive way.

1.2. Who needs a personal brand and why?

Some people think: "If I have the knowledge, skills and competence, I do not have to use any tricks because sooner or later others will see the real me". Nothing can be further from the truth. People who think like this will lose out to those who have a worse "inside" but better "packaging". If you look around, you will see that successful people are not always the most intelligent or the most competent. Besides, success is relative and means different things to different people.

Imagine that you walk into a bookshop to quickly buy a cookbook. You do not have any particular preferences, so your attention is drawn to the books with the most interesting covers. From several available cookbooks, you quickly choose two with the best covers. After reading both, you conclude that one is poor and the other is better, so you recommend it to your friends. Unfortunately, it is possible that you actually missed the best cookbook just because it had an uninteresting, unappealing cover.

Politicians, business people, professionals (e.g. architects, doctors, lawyers), investment advisors, consultants, coaches, experts, journalists, artists, and even young graduates who are on the threshold of their professional careers - so everyone who wants to shape their public image consciously - should work on their personal brand. It makes little sense to ask who needs a personal brand. I would rather ask: Who does not need it?

1.3. Personal brand vs. personal image

Personal image concerns external relations based on the perception of a given person, their appearance and behaviour (compare fig. 1.1). Thus, it is possible to create an artificial personal image, but it is impossible to build