



“The greatest way to live with honor in this world is to be what we pretend to be.” *Socrates*

“Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.” *Judy Garland*

## SECRET I I

# Show the World Who You Really Are

**W**hen you start living in tune with your values, you will naturally feel more confident and ready to show the “real you” to the world. Personal branding is a way to showcase your positive influence and convey the essence of who you are.

When people meet you for the first time, all of their gut instincts come into play. They either consciously or unconsciously come up with an impression of you based on the way you dress, talk, smile, frown and act. Unknowingly, they are really thinking about your brand and forming an enduring impression. That is why we say, “You will never get a second chance to make a first impression.”

Your personal brand is a combination of the way you look, communicate and act. Think of Donald Trump, Princess Diana, Pierre Trudeau, Barbara Walters, Evil Knieval, Elvis Presley — each name brings to mind a different image and sensation based on a combination of what these people look like, act like and what they’ve done.

We all have a brand or image we project, whether we’re famous or not. Remember, none of these people were famous throughout their entire lives. They only became so through a combination of talent and developing their personal brands.



## Walk the Talk

Personal branding is especially important when you're in a public position, but even if you don't crave the limelight you need to be aware of branding. Developing a compelling personal brand helps people see you more clearly. When they do, they begin to feel more drawn to you and what you have to offer. The most effective personal branding helps your family, friends, co-workers, peers and employers understand the essence of who you are. You begin to walk your talk and, as a result, you'll find you have to spend less time explaining who you are or justifying your ideas.

In his book *The Brand Called You*, Peter Montoya writes, "Personal branding lets you control how other people perceive you...You're telling them what you stand for — but in a way that's so organic and unobtrusive that they think they've developed that perception all by themselves..."

## The Basics of Personal Branding

In his article "The Three C's of Personal Branding," William Arruda, founder of the branding company Reach, says *clarity*, *consistency* and *constancy* are the keys to strong personal brand development.

**Clarity:** "Richard Branson," Arruda writes, "is clear about being a risk taker. He is not your typical CEO in a blue suit and white shirt. He is a daredevil who dressed in a wedding gown when he launched *Virgin Bridal*, and was not dressed at all when he launched his book, *Virginity*. Among his first big risky ventures was signing the Sex Pistols onto his record label when no one else would even consider them." Branson went on to challenge *British Airways* by launching his own airline, *Virgin*. He even took on *Coke* by launching *Virgin Cola* and went head to head with Donald Trump by launching his own reality show. Despite his fortune, Branson isn't content to rest on his laurels. He continues to take risks, like attempting to fly around the world in a hot air balloon.



**Consistency:** To achieve brand consistency, you don't have to remain exactly the same forever. Instead, look at common themes surrounding the way you live. Is a particular style your hallmark? Think of famous people like Jennifer Lopez, Meg Ryan and Johnny Depp. Even though they change with the times, they remain consistent in their overall style.

**Constancy:** Oprah, William Arruda explains, is the perfect example of constancy. "Oprah is the human brand of show biz. She cares for people and is willing to share herself to help people advance. This clarity about what makes her unique is consistent among all of her endeavors. And it is constantly visible to her target audience through her numerous ways of interacting with the public."

## First Impressions

You are in charge of your brand, from the clothes you wear to the friends you keep, to the career and clients you choose. Everything you do radiates who you are. On the popular TV show "What Not to Wear," two fashion and image experts work with people in need of makeovers and personal branding. Even though the entire audience can see these people are not showcasing their best attributes, the people themselves usually don't see it at first. Often, they worry that the makeover process will hide who they really are. However, once they've undergone the makeover — no cosmetic surgery here — they generally end up feeling that the person buried inside is finally allowed to shine. On this show, artists don't come out looking like executives. They look like successful artists. Bike couriers don't look like ballerinas. They just make a better first impression and convey more of the essence of who they really are.

"The five to seven second period of making a first impression is critical," personal branding consultant Lesley Everett told CNN. Everett is the author of the book *Walking Tall: Key Steps to Total Image Impact*.



“Research shows that in the next five seconds we can add another 50 percent to that first impression. Research is also showing that it takes another 20 further experiences with somebody to change a first impression. So in those first 15 seconds we have got key clues into how somebody operates, into their business approach, their attitude, their personality. So when we get to 30 seconds, we have really given enough time to make that impression subconsciously.”

Hopefully, when you think of Peter Thomas your impression is that I’m enthusiastic, trustworthy, healthy, hardworking and a good leader. That’s who I really am and it’s the brand I’ve worked hard to maintain throughout the years. Everything I do and believe in supports these principles. My mother used to tell me to imagine everything I did would one day be written across the sky for everyone to read. I felt I had better do good things if I wanted to see good things up there.

“A brand is a promise, and your personal brand equity is so critical in this day and age where there is no job security,” says Praveen Varshney, director of Varshney Capital Corp, a family-run business based in Vancouver, British Columbia, that provides venture capital, merchant banking and corporate advisory services. “The essence of a brand is the mental imprint we plant on the minds of our market and people around us (even people we don’t know).”

In delivering on his brand, Praveen likes to use the phrase “setting and managing expectations.” For him, that means “saying what you mean and doing what you say.” Better still is UPOD, an acronym Praveen came up with which stands for underpromise and overdeliver so you exceed all your promises.

“Most people do the opposite,” says Praveen. “They “OPUD” — overpromise and underdeliver. They say the things they think other people want to hear and set them and others up for disappointment. But I don’t know a single person that doesn’t like a pleasant surprise!”



## Authenticity and Integrity

Praveen has enjoyed a successful career but none of the external trappings of success are as vital to him as maintaining his personal integrity. This internal integrity is about acting in alignment with his values and belief systems and having a strong moral compass — being true to himself and always “doing the right thing.” He says one way he checks in with his personal integrity is to make decisions and take actions as if his two young impressionable children were sitting beside him.

“Children do what they observe. What kind of role model do I want to be for my kids? An exemplary one,” he says.

Praveen recalls a story told by productivity consultant Denis Waitley. A simple motto hung on the living room wall of Waitley’s grandparents’ small house, where many seeds for Waitley’s development were planted. The motto said, “Life is like a field of newly fallen snow; where I choose to walk, every step will show.” His grandparents didn’t talk about the motto; they lived it. They believed you were either honest or you weren’t.”

“There was nothing in between, no such thing as partial honesty,” says Praveen. “Integrity, a standard of personal morality and ethics, is not relative to the situation you happen to find yourself in and doesn’t sell out to expediency.”

“A lot of young people,” he adds, “...are taken in by media popularity, big talk, expensive possessions and flashy looks. They move through their years convinced that the externals are what count...Relying on looks or status to feel good and enhance the impression they make is not as important as saying and doing the right things, letting their actions speak for themselves. To develop inner value and personal growth, practice being a ‘net giver.’ Ask ‘how can I help you?’ versus ‘what’s in it for me?’ Maintain a steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code.”

“Other techniques to build your integrity,” Praveen continues, “are to practice humility. Do simple things like saying please and thank



you. Treat everyone — no matter what class, race, profession or age — with dignity, respect and courtesy.”

“Bottom-line success often leads to fleeting stardom and ultimate defeat. There are no degrees of integrity. Just as you’re pregnant or you’re not, you have integrity or you don’t. And like a ball of glass, if you drop your integrity, it will get nicked or permanently shattered.”

He says when you focus on creating and having integrity, you create the awareness and perception — which is reality — that you’re reliable, dependable and the “go-to-person” everyone wants on their team. Conversely, no amount of exterior polish will help if you are inauthentic because, on some level, people always sense falsity and pull away from it. To attract the right kind of people in your life, highlight your authentic skills, strengths, values and passions.

## Assess Your Brand

To begin bringing out your strengths and developing your personal brand, ask yourself:

- \* What makes me different from everyone else?
- \* What are my most admirable character traits?
- \* What do most people identify me with?
- \* In what ways do I demonstrate my values to others?
- \* What parts of myself am I totally comfortable with, and which parts make me feel awkward, as though I am wearing a pair of ill-fitting shoes?
- \* Do I dress for success and confidence, or do I just “throw something on?” Do my clothes reflect my personality in a polished, professional way?



## Create Your Personal Mission Statement

To help you focus on what you want to project to the world through your personal brand, I recommend creating your own mission statement. This statement should say who you are and what you want to communicate most to the people you meet.

To assist you, here's one example of a mission statement written by a biologist:

*I will live a life of authenticity, originality, adventure and discovery. People will identify me with a warm smile, lack of pretension, strong handshake and high fitness level. I will project the courage to go farther than others to make discoveries. I will travel throughout the world in my quest. I will be energized, fulfilled, and inspired.*

Jamesie Bower, a longtime friend, has been in my life for a few important “firsts.” She was there when I returned to Edmonton from Hawaii after I’d just purchased Century 21. She was also there for the very first LifePilot workshop and has subsequently “audited” four more. As the owner of Staff Systems, a successful executive recruitment business in Vancouver, Jamesie hardly needs any reminders of how much she has accomplished. Even so, she found a great deal of value in writing her LifePilot mission statement — with some unexpected surprises.

In 2002, Jamesie was driving home from work, thinking about the mission statement she had been asked to write as part of her LifePilot work. “I wanted to write something that highlighted the positive energy I have been blessed with, so I was very excited,” she recalls.

As a busy professional, Jamesie typically followed a solid routine to keep her life on track. But that evening, instead of getting changed out of her work clothes and taking off her jewelry before launching into her chores, she plunged right into cleaning her kitchen so she could get straight to her LifePilot homework.



The next morning, as she was getting ready for an early appointment, Jamesie looked on the dresser where she usually kept her rings. They weren't there. They weren't anywhere in the house. At that point she realized what she must have done. Tossing out the garbage the night before, she had somehow thrown away her rings.

"I was absolutely frantic," she recalls, "because those rings had a great deal of meaning to me. That feeling stayed with me on my drive to work, but then, as I was driving across the Lions' Gate Bridge in Vancouver, I suddenly had an epiphany. I thought to myself, 'J.B., there are thousands of women with more diamonds than you will ever possess. Get over it!'"

Jamesie realized that her diamonds did not define her. What glittered most about Jamesie — and still does — is that remarkable, sparkling energy that no diamonds could ever possess. That energy was the focus of the mission statement she had written.

Oddly enough, when Jamesie went to lunch that day with friends, they inadvertently joined a table of people whose business was diamond exploration. She told them her story and they joked about "exploring" the garbage for Jamesie's diamonds. She never did find the diamonds, but she found something far more valuable: her worth beyond jewels.

"LifePilot," says Jamesie, "has given me a better understanding of my values and actions, and I'm learning to appreciate all the lessons in life, whether they have a positive or negative effect. I look at life in a more positive way and try to pass that on to the people around me, including my staff. I think LifePilot's influence on people is probably much greater than the individual might know. It's hard to be around Peter without his positive attitude rubbing off on you. Whenever something supposedly can't be done, Peter just looks at it and says, 'We'll find a solution.' And you know, nine out of ten times it works."



Write your mission statement:

## Write Your Biography

Aside from writing your mission statement, another exercise that will help you develop your brand is to write a two- to three-paragraph personal biography. Pretend you are writing it for publication in a prestigious, popular news magazine like *Time*. Strive to make your biography lively and full of interesting details. Accentuate the positives and find ways to show how interesting you are (remember, we are all interesting!).

Write your biography:



## Help People Discover Your Depth

The most effective personal branding means taking a deeper look at who you are, where you want to go in life and what you hope to contribute. Exploring the depths of the person you are will help you become the person you want to be. As Praveen Varshney says, “Remain true to your integrity.”

It’s what I’ve tried to do throughout my life, and I am very complimented when people sense that authenticity. As Jamesie puts it, “Peter didn’t set out to learn to be a stage presenter or motivational expert. He learned to live life. In everything he does, he walks his talk.” If that’s what others see as my personal brand, I’ve done something right.



## CHAPTER REVIEW

- \* The Three C's of Personal Branding are Clarity, Constancy and Consistency.
- \* The first five to seven seconds of meeting someone is a critical time for making a good first impression. It takes another 20 further experiences with somebody to change a first impression.
- \* Creating your mission statement and biography helps you focus your energy and discover the kernel of your personal brand.
- \* To be really effective, personal branding must be authentic; walk your talk.