



YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY – BUILDING A BRAND

Like any business you have a brand, an identity. Your unique identity is determined by your values, personality, skills, your behavioural style and your passions in life.

The starting point to determining your identity is figuring out what you want in life, what your core values are and what image you want to present. Your brand is built from the thoughts, words and reactions of other people to the image you present be it through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs, business cards, how you dress and what you say. The more consistent you are the better the message and the more believable.

The fundamental message your brand needs to make is a promise of what people will receive from you. The integrity of your brand is delivery of that promise.

Ask yourself the following:

- What do I stand for and what value do I bring?
- What makes me different to others?
- How compelling is my offer?

Being an expert in something is an important differentiator. We all have skills and expertise but we often overlook the fact. What is your special skill and expertise that others don't have? This is a point of leverage.

Have a vision and a mission for yourself. Develop your sales pitch around your brand - an elevator pitch that tells people immediately who you are and what you do. Remember the 'why'. The 'why' you do is a greater calling than the 'how'.

Once you have established your identity you need to use this where and when you can and you need to look to develop a following. This can be done by supporting other people's brands, developing your unique network of people. Increasingly, we are valued not just by what we bring but the strength and value of our network.

Having a strong brand will assist you in your interviews as it communicates credibility.

You will need to manage your brand keep it up to date, track your online information and above all keep it clean. People will look you up on social media and read what other people say about you and what you say about others.

A strong way to stand out is to have an opinion and to articulate this through your network. It helps when you are an expert in a particular field.

Take the opportunity to speak at seminars, write blogs, and contribute to other people's functions, in order to build your brand.

It makes it a lot easier for people to engage you if they can identify you by your brand and they see it consistently displayed when they seek out information on you.