



WILLIAM ARRUDA

DIGITAL YOU

Real Personal Branding
in the Virtual Age

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atd

PRESS

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Introduction

Personal Branding Is Dead

That headline might seem heretical—not to mention self-defeating—coming from me, a pioneer in the field of personal branding.

But it's true.

At least, it's true that the concept of personal branding as we once defined it has no more life in it. It's no longer relevant. It's nothing more than a relic.

RIP old personal branding.

We didn't know it then, but analog personal branding was a mere prototype for the glorious, global, digital branding machine that today's workforce is learning to operate.

But before we lay to rest the personal branding of yesterday, let's take a trip down memory lane (at warp speed).

The idea of personal branding was not an instant hit. Take it from me. I was there at the beginning. Personal branding simmered for many years and was predicted to be little more than a passing fad. When Tom Peters coined the term back in 1997, few people knew what it meant, and even fewer were interested in building their brand.

The acceptance of personal branding was slow because the circumstances that require it hadn't fully formed. Just eight years after Tom Peters's prophetic article, "The Brand Called You," was published, the magazine that featured it on its cover—*Fast Company*—decided that they had made a mistake. They declared personal branding dead before any life was ever breathed into it (Lidsky 2005). And it's true, in 2005 professionals weren't feeling stressed about their long-term career prospects and

most people still worked alongside their colleagues in corporate towers or suburban office parks. The Internet was in its infancy. And the product that changed how we communicate, the iPhone, didn't make its debut until 2007. It wasn't until 2014 that the Internet was accessible in 80 percent of U.S. homes, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

But rapid changes in the global marketplace, combined with multiple, serious downturns in the economy, led career-minded professionals to start taking notice of the potential for personal branding to serve as a career management strategy. From there, even if they didn't know exactly what it is, executives realized that having a brand is an essential career asset that can help them reach their goals. And companies got in on the act, too. Most major corporations have adopted personal branding programs into their talent development initiatives. My company alone supports 20 percent of the Fortune 100 and dozens of global brands, associations, and institutions.

Ironically, now that personal branding has made it to the big league, there's talk that the personal branding revolution is over. I hear about it all the time—from the press and career coaches to HR executives. It's true that pseudo-branding has lost its cachet, but the new era of digital personal branding is not only thriving but vital to success.

Let me set the record straight by describing three reasons why naysayers have muddled the truth about the personal branding revolution, which I can assure you is alive and well.

- 1. Message overload.** You're inundated with messages all day long: ads, emails, app alerts, texts, tweets. It's easy to think that personal branding is next to impossible now that the roar of the crowd is almost deafening. But silence is not the answer. Quite the opposite. Today's tools for digital personal branding provide clever ways to differentiate yourself, presenting your valuable message to the right people at the right time. The same tools that caused Information

Age overload can help you rise above the roar and get noticed when you use them effectively.

2. **Misunderstanding.** Many people confound personal branding with self-promotion, bragging, or manufactured pristine personas created by a self-centered generation. The term *personal branding* has become hijacked by those who associate it with mindless, endless online chatter and the grandiose desire to be visible, known, and popular. Equating personal branding with social media excess has distorted the true value of personal branding. Personal branding is not a TMZ story about the Kardashians. And it's certainly not about visibility for the sake of being visible. In fact, personal branding is not about you. It's about how you deliver value to others.
3. **Myopia.** Ironically, the third reason some people think personal branding is dead is related to the rise of virtual employees. Companies, once reluctant to let their people work from home for fear that they would goof off, are now becoming proponents of remote work. They are encouraging their employees to keep away from the office; in a 2015 Gallup study, the number of American workers who have telecommuted climbed to 37 percent. The cost savings to companies are just too big to ignore. But as work becomes more virtual, employees often have the erroneous belief that they're free from having to brand themselves because their work will speak for itself. Without the distraction of face-to-face chats at the coffee station, the quality of the work takes center stage, right? Nothing could be further from the truth. We all know the old adage: out of sight, out of mind. Virtual employees have to work harder to be relevant and remain top-of-mind. They must use new ways to visibly demonstrate their value. Being virtual can mean being invisible, and digital personal branding is the solution.

Personal branding has taken on a completely new life since the days when it was only being used by senior execs in large corporations. Today, college students are using it to stand out so they can land internships. Some universities have added branding courses to their curriculum. Even high school students are perfecting their LinkedIn profiles to help them secure a spot in the college of their choice.

In my own business, I can see how it has become a thread seamlessly woven into the fabric of career management. In 2018, my company signed on eight new corporate clients for personal branding programs (two of them rank in the top 10 places to work). My company's personal branding certification programs (now delivered by Career Thought Leaders) had near-record attendance, and the number of Google alerts I received on the term *personal branding* increased 30 percent over the past year.

Personal Branding Is Dead. Long Live Personal Branding.

Let's focus on where personal branding is today, where it's headed, and what you need to be thinking about so you can remain relevant. Let's be clear: Your personal brand is your most valuable career asset when you know how to uncover, express, and nurture it.

Personal Branding Reboot: Nine Key Trends

There are nine business and career trends that are influencing how you need to think about—and strategically manage—your brand. Understanding these trends is critical to your ability to amp up your success and happiness at work.

1. Nexting

Today's youngest workers are more likely to have 15 or more jobs in their lifetime.

Tenure is down.

The time we spend in companies is waning. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average worker has held 10 different jobs. Today's youngest workers are more likely to have 15 or more jobs in their lifetimes. That's at least 50 percent more jobs. According to a study by Nintex, 53 percent of employees don't expect to stay at their companies beyond five years. And Deloitte's 2018 Millennial Survey revealed that Gen Zers expect to stay with their current employer for fewer than two years (Previte 2019). At the same time, the life expectancy of companies is shrinking. The security you feel "working for the man" is probably false security. The new career mantra is "What's next?"

Although successful branding is based in authenticity, an element of aspiration is essential to career success. You need to plan for (and be prepared for) what's next. In the book *Switchers: How Smart Professionals Change Careers and Seize Success*, Dawn Graham points out the importance of ensuring your brand is aligned with the growing professional network you seek to influence.

"Today's job market is shifting so quickly that career changes, hybrid roles, and budding industries are becoming the new normal," she told me by email, "so it's important that everyone understand how to rebrand for a career transition. Professionals often have a wealth of transferable skills and experiences that make them both qualified, as well as unique, for open positions, but my mantra is 'match first, stand out second.' Too often, job seekers fail to brand to their target audience, relaying impressive achievements that unfortunately aren't relevant to the role. Those achievements

will serve you well when you bring them up at the right time—for example, to demonstrate a competitive advantage over the other finalists when you're on the verge of an offer.”

What's more, retirement has been completely redefined. We're living longer—giving us an opportunity to write a complete chapter 2 of our careers (or chapter 16 if we think there will be 15 distinct roles in our “official” career). The idea of retirement has all but disappeared. Navigating this major career milestone requires preparation—a longer-term mindset for your career planning.

2. Flextrapreneurship

“We're definitely seeing a trend where professionals want more control over when, where, and how they work, and they're turning to remote work to get it.”

—Brie Reynolds, Senior Career Specialist at FlexJobs

Rigidity is gone when it comes to the entrepreneurial–intrapreneurial divide. There is an increasing fluidity between working for a company and working for *your* company. Countless online communities are being built to support this paradigm. Remote.com, for example, with more than 2 million members, brings together people who are working remotely for a company with entrepreneurs and solopreneurs.

Moreover, companies are seeking the entrepreneurial mindset when hiring talent. In her SlideShare “Five Ways to Get Your Team Thinking Like Entrepreneurs,” Sophia Ellis, head of content at the productivity app Hibox, writes, “The companies with the most entrepreneurial–thinking team members are going to be the ones that surpass all others despite how big they are, where they started, and how they started to provide just that. An entrepreneurial mindset is something that must be both hired in and fostered in companies of any size to guarantee success in the new business landscape.”

3. Digital First

“11 percent of Gen Zers google themselves every day.”

—Bank of America

You may not need to google yourself every day, but you do need to know what’s out there and proactively manage how you show up online. Like it or not, your Google results are quickly becoming your first impression. When people want to learn about you, they’ll open up a browser, enter your name, and see what comes up. I call it *he-surfing* or *she-surfing*, and it’s a phenomenon that’s here to stay. In his eye-opening book, *Ctrl Alt Delete*, digital media expert Mitch Joel speaks of a digital-first posture. He acknowledges that the web is often the first place we go when we want to learn about something—or someone. The implications of this phenomenon are huge when it comes to career success. Eighty percent of employers admit to googling potential employees before they hire them.

We live in a relationship economy, where influencing others is essential. If your initial impression is anemic or inauthentic, you’re squandering opportunities and will be left behind. We’ll talk more about the connection between virtual branding, your career success, and the three cognitive biases that come into play in chapter 4.

4. Brandscaping

*More than 100,000 articles are posted on LinkedIn each week,
and 576,000 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every day.*

It’s a noisy world. To be heard in this world requires steadfast clarity and focus. You’ll get lost in the clamor if your message isn’t clear, consistent, and constant (the three Cs of strong brands, which we’ll talk about later in the

book). Brandscaping is all about trimming the extraneous stuff that distracts, detracts, or disorients so your image comes across pristine and potent.

You need to build your brand around something—not a hundred things. That’s way too complicated for people to figure out. It’s cacophonous. But when you are singing the same note all the time, you can be recognized and remembered. Just as Volvo is known for safety and Apple is synonymous with innovation, you must distill your brand into that nugget of value that you want people to hear from you, repeated often, like a refrain. In our over-stimulated 24/7 world of nonstop communications, people just don’t have the time or inclination to try to figure you out. Unless you’re working for a startup or you’re a one-person show, being a jack-of-all-trades will work against you. Focus needs to be your mantra.

5. Treadmill Learning

“We accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.”

—Peter Drucker

You can’t stand still on a treadmill that’s in motion. If you don’t keep moving forward, you’ll fall off the back and be left behind. The same is true of learning in the new world of work. If you aren’t actively learning every day, you’ll quickly lose your relevance and gain the reputation of being a reluctant, reticent relic. In addition, your company is no longer responsible for telling you what to learn or how to grow professionally. But compared to Peter Drucker’s era, we have learned so much about how to learn. It’s never been so easy to expand your horizons using methods that suit your budget, your learning style, and your calendar.

Most of the responsibility—and opportunity—for learning has been switched to you. And that’s great news! According to Kelly Palmer in her book, *The Expertise Economy: How the Smartest Companies Use Learning to Engage, Compete, and Succeed*, “The one-size-fits-all mentality of corporate education is no longer relevant. Learning needs to be customized for each individual based on their skill and knowledge gaps, personal and professional goals, and specific interests.” That puts the onus on you to determine what to learn and how to obtain your learning. Palmer adds, “One of the main goals of personalized learning is ultimately to combine the best of what the ecosystem has to offer. It’s not an either/or proposition, but rather aims to unite the best features of learner motivation, technology, and online learning supported by teacher and peer expertise.”

With that in mind, I’ve created this book to give you personalized learning opportunities at every turn. (Yes, reading this book counts as a giant leap in your learning.)

6. Digital Advocacy

Employees have on average 10 times more social connections than a brand does, and brand messages reached 561 percent further when shared by employees vs. the same messages shared via official brand social channels. Brand messages are reshared 24 times more frequently when distributed by employees vs. the brand (Burke 2017).

We’re witnessing one of the greatest contradictions in business history. On one hand, the 30-year, lifelong career with the same company is gone, and you’re expected to operate as more of a free agent even when you’re “working for the man.” Yet company loyalty is highly valued. How can that be? The answer is that “company loyalty” has taken a new form.

In the past, your career success was related to focusing on your role, function, and department. Today, success requires that you be a company brand ambassador and megaphone, even if you're not going to stay with that company for more than a few years. Company communications used to be a solo act. The CEO, via the communications department, would decide what to say, whom the audience would be, and which medium would be used. Today, corporate messaging comes from a chorus. And nowhere is this more important than online.

Companies need this chorus of messaging because stakeholders crave transparency. It's the collective voice that helps support the corporate mission, and your voice must be a part of that. This not only benefits the company, it also benefits you and your free-agent mindset. When you do commit to interacting with company-produced social content, you move yourself outside the normal hierarchy, learn what's going on in other areas of the company, and expand your visibility with your own online community. Mark Burgess, president of Blue Focus Marketing and co-author of *The Social Employee*, puts it this way: "We live in an era of fake news and a decline in trust that extends to our institutions, politicians, and brands. In this new atmosphere, brands that are seen as self-serving and focused on profits at the expense of people and/or the environment are likely to fail. The new competitive advantage is trust, and engaged, empowered social employees are the fuel that powers purpose-driven brands."

7. Distance Branding

Seventy percent of Millennials have left or considered leaving a job because it lacked flexible work options, while only about half of older workers report the same (Howington 2018). By 2020, almost half of the workforce will be made up of Millennials (Weber 2013).

Proximity is down. More and more, people are working some or all of the time remotely. “Work Anywhere Anytime” is the new career chant. Companies are taking advantage of the communications tools that allow for virtual employees to engage and interact. Some companies track badge swipes at their offices, and if you don’t make the threshold of the minimum number of office visits each month, you no longer have the right to an office—or even a hot desk. Organizations know that when people work from home, they save the company expensive real-estate costs. They also understand that employees are demanding flexibility when it comes to work.

While this new “work anywhere” model is making companies more financially competitive and more attractive to the latest generation of workers, it comes with new challenges: Employees feel less connected to what’s going on. A 2018 report from WorkplaceTrends.com finds that for employees who depend on email to communicate with teammates, more than 40 percent said they feel lonely always or very often, are not engaged, and have a high need for social connection. The study also found that a third of employees globally work remotely always or very often, and two-thirds of them aren’t engaged. Only 5 percent of remote workers always or very often see themselves working at their company for their entire career, compared with 28 percent who never work remotely.

What does this mean for you? The hurdles for personal branding can be high. You’ll need to become more deliberate and focused on branding, which will require more effort to create familiarity, recognition, and connection with colleagues. You can’t achieve your goals if you don’t build relationships and influence decision makers. These needs are only going to become more pressing. Remote work is here to stay, and it’s poised to rocket even higher. Nick Marcario, co-founder and CEO of Remote.com, says, “It’s no secret work is changing as the workforce mobilizes. There is an abundance of research and statistics that illustrate how prominent the shift is and how much it’s expected to accelerate in the future.”

8. Digital Dexterity

“Seventy-six percent of CEOs are concerned about the lack of digital skills within their own workforce—and 23 percent are extremely concerned about the digital skills of their leadership team.”

—PwC 21st CEO Survey: Talent

The one skill that’s required across industries, functions, and levels is digital dexterity. Companies know that to maintain a competitive advantage, they need a workforce that is digitally enabled and enabling, because the most visible innovations emerge from technology—and from employees who know how to translate high tech into a high-impact experience for customers.

The world’s largest professional services firm, PwC, with more than a quarter million employees and partners, even created a new executive role—chief digital officer—to ensure all employees have the digital skills necessary to innovate internally and impress their clients externally. They tapped a senior partner, Joe Atkinson, to lead the initiative. He told me: “My role is to be ‘a constructive disrupter.’ My mission is to enhance digital fitness throughout the organization and put in place the learning and technology necessary to get the entire organization comfortable with the language and concepts that are driving digital innovation.”

That means whether you’re working in marketing, accounts payable, or legal, you need to bulk up your digital muscle, knowing which developments—from artificial intelligence and robotics to data analytics and new social media platforms—can become valuable assets for your team.

9. YOUcasting

“Globally, Internet video traffic will grow four-fold from 2017 to 2022, a compound annual growth rate of 33 percent” (Cisco).

I used to say that video is the future of personal branding. Well, the future has arrived! Video allows you to deliver a complete communication and connect more deeply and emotionally with those you seek to influence. Video is becoming a significant communications tool and will ultimately replace email and texting as a more powerful and valuable medium. YouTube is already the second-largest search engine after Google, according to Search Engine Journal (2018).

According to experiments done by psychologist Albert Mehrabian, words account for only 7 percent of whether a communicator is likable, and the rest is determined by tone of voice, intonation, and body language. See why video is such a powerful tool for personal branding? Virtually all the trends we have discussed so far are creating the opportunity for video to take over as our primary communications vehicle. Video skills are just as essential as, if not more than, writing or public speaking. Video conferences will replace teleconferences and vmail will become the new email. Professionals who get comfortable with this medium will remain relevant and compelling. Those who stick with the 26 letters of the alphabet will be left behind.

Live Between the Hyphens

You might feel a little daunted right now. How can you become a remote-but-visible, high-tech, high-touch, remote-yet-embedded, independent-but-loyal, video-producing, content-generating brand ambassador for yourself? The key word is *you*. Digital or not, successful branding is always rooted in

authenticity, and effective messaging is rooted in simplicity. Even if you have never considered that you have a brand, your current LinkedIn profile is nearly blank, or you have relied on your organization to manage your career, I'll share with you everything you need to know and do so you can take advantage of this new digital branding phenomenon. My approach will help you find your true self between those hyphens, unearthing the traits that help you thrive and then showcasing them using methods that are efficient and effective. What does it take to tap the power of personal branding in the digital age? Nothing less than a total mindset reset.

About This Book

In *Digital You*, I'll teach you how to master the new rules and tools for staying relevant, visible, and valuable in a world of work that is continually being reinvented. It's time to stop worrying about career extinction and start crafting a brand of distinction. This is true regardless of who you are or where you are in your career. Whether you're new to the work world, mid-career, or greatly experienced; whether you're in career transition, just hired, a consultant looking to branch out, an entrepreneur trying to break in, or any combination thereof, this book is for you.

A few years ago, I was feeling untethered (read: lonely) and wanted to connect to a community—my community. That's the challenge with being a public speaker and the entrepreneur of a completely virtual organization. Since most of my work is speaking, I decided to go to the annual National Speakers Association event in Philly (just a quick train ride from NYC) to connect with other speakers in person. My expectations were high. I thought I was going to fit right in with a community of like-minded professional speakers, but in fact it was quite the opposite. I found that the speakers were impressive, inspiring, and engaging, but what the conference lacked for me was authenticity, application, and action.

I realized that my brand differentiation as a speaker is that I don't try to comply with the "standard rules of public speaking." I don't rehearse my presentations a thousand times until every movement, gesture, and inflection is memorized. I'm not an actor. I've never delivered the same keynote the same way twice. And the inspirational part of public speaking is just that for me—part of the experience. The other part—and my favorite part—is in the action. I don't just want to fuel people up and have the fuel leak out of the tank over time. I want to compel them to combust that fuel—taking action so they can turn that fuel into focus, and then turn focus into future success.

I take the same approach in my role of author. I don't want you to just learn some interesting things about digital branding. I did not set out to write a book about digital branding theory. I want you to apply what you learn, taking action and moving your career forward while amping up the joy factor at work.

To that end, this book is designed to be read—and acted upon—serially. It follows a logical order that will help you get to the top of your career the way you would ascend a staircase—one step at a time. Even if you feel you have a good understanding of your brand, don't skip part 1. It will help you clarify and refine your thinking before you move into digital branding—making your social branding actions that much more potent. I've divided the book into four parts, reflecting the personal digital journey I'm asking you to take—and I'll be along every step of the way.

In Part 1: Real You, I introduce personal branding and invite you to discover where your unique self fits. I help you to define yourself and uncover your brand in chapter 1, and better understand the perceptions others have of you and why those are important in chapter 2, so that you're ready to define the authentic story you want to tell (chapter 3).

In Part 2: Virtual You, I invite you to think about your digital impression. In chapter 4, I help you to understand how the digital-first phenomenon

can work for you. In chapter 5, I share how to translate the real you for a digital audience, and in chapter 6, I show how you can expand that digital brand you've created.

In Part 3: Visual You, I show you how you to build on and develop your brand to become a multimedia standout. In chapter 7, I help you see the power of pictures, both still and moving, to carry your digital message. Then, you'll learn how to build your personal brand identity system in chapter 8. In chapter 9, I'll share my favorite video tips to engage and connect, and explain why I'm video's biggest fan and why you should be too.

In Part 4: Social You, I ask you to consider the heights you can reach through digital brand development, your network, and thought leadership. In chapter 10, I help you assess your current networks, both online and off, to build your social network and nurture relationships. In chapter 11, you'll learn how to update, curate, and create content related to your expertise to express your thought leadership and promote others. Finally, in chapter 12, I show you how you can truly enlarge your role to your wider community, becoming a digital advocate.

To fulfill my role of CEO (chief encouragement officer) and action-inspiring branding consultant, I have filled the book with practical opportunities to absorb and apply the content:



MINDSET RESET

These are important mental shifts you must make to be relevant today and to benefit from all the digital branding revolution has to offer.



PONDER THIS

These are powerful questions that can help you clarify who you are and what's important. Don't gloss over these questions, especially those where the answer doesn't come to mind quickly.



BRAND HACK

These are a simple (often uncommon) actions you can take immediately (what I call a super special secret tip) that will have a big impact on your branding with relatively little effort.



DO THIS,



NOT THAT

These are guideposts to direct you to the most productive path and help you avoid pitfalls, time wasters, and trite advice that could actually diminish your brand.



REMOTE CONTROL

This advice is specifically designed for those of you who are working remotely part or all of the time, to help you control your brand despite the distance. Distance branding (trend number 7) is real and will affect every professional now and in the future.



FUN FACT

These are interesting and often surprising statistics that help reinforce a key message or lesson.



BRANDI BRAINSTORMS

To show you how the branding process builds, I'll share some branding elements from a fictional person throughout the book. Brandi is the wildly successful personal brander I created, not in a test tube but on the pages of this book. Her traits are the hybrid of two equally accomplished clients with whom I have worked.

So follow along, taking action as you navigate the chapters, and as my CareerBlast.TV co-founder, Ora Shtull, and I always say, *have a blast!*

Part 1

Real You

*“We are at our most productive and creative when we are happy
and being ourselves at work.”*

—Richard Branson

CHAPTER 1

Uncover Your Brand

Who Are You?

Real precedes virtual.

One of the most egregious errors I see in digital branding comes from starting in the middle of the process. Why do I see this error so often? Because so many professionals started building their brand only after the digital tools became available. They began creating visibility without clarity about their message—squandering their efforts and diluting their brand rather than targeting it.

You can't start expressing and expanding your brand in the digital world until you extract your traits. That is, you need to understand exactly what your brand is.

But before we do that, let's take a good look at the cornerstone and define what personal branding is.

When I started my personal branding business about two decades ago, few people had heard of personal branding—and even fewer were interested in building their brand. Today, as Google results reveal, there's lots of talk about personal branding, and virtually every career-minded professional knows its importance. Although awareness is high, misconceptions persist. So let me define personal branding here.

Personal branding is the habit of demonstrating and communicating your unique, valuable traits to communities where you can thrive.



Personal branding supports not just finding a new job but also finding a job where you'll be happy and appreciated because you and the organization are providing value to each other.

The power of personal branding goes way beyond job search. It's an important part of getting promoted, increasing business success, and enhancing personal fulfillment. Having a strong brand helps you do your job better. Most major corporations realize this and have created programs to help their employees build their brands to increase engagement, performance, and satisfaction.

The Six Laws of Successful Personal Branding

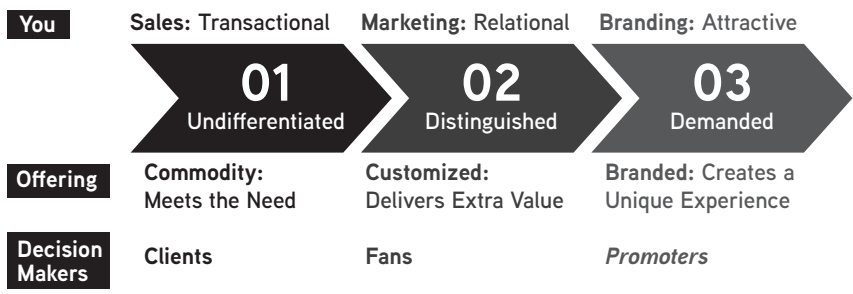
- Everyone has the potential to build a strong and desirable brand.
- Your brand is based in authenticity—who you really are.
- Although based in authenticity, your brand must position you for what's next.
- What others think counts. Your brand is held in the hearts and minds of those around you.
- Personal branding means giving value, not taking. It's not about egotism or chest-pounding.
- Personal branding is not a onetime event. You change, the work landscape changes. Everything around you changes. Your brand must evolve to remain relevant.

Three Stages of Building a Powerful Brand

Relationships are the currency of business.

Now that we understand what branding is, I'd like to introduce you to a model that shows what happens when you build a strong, differentiated, and magnetic brand. I built this model after working with thousands of professionals all over the world and realized that successful brands sit along a continuum (Figure 1-1).

Figure 1-1. The Branding Continuum: 3 Levels of Brand Success



The personal branding process lets you rise from being a mere service provider to becoming a brand in demand. Let's look at the three phases: undifferentiated, distinguished, and demanded.

Undifferentiated

This level of branding is actually not branding at all. It means that what you offer ticks all the boxes—you meet all the eligibility requirements—but you don't deliver anything that makes you unique or memorable. You aren't giving decision makers any reason to go to bat for you. Your relationships with those around you are transactional, not relational, which makes you easier to replace. This puts you in the position of having to actively pursue every opportunity you seek—with little external support, and lots of exertion on your part.

Distinguished

Many of the successful professionals I meet fall into this category. In addition to meeting all the requirements that people seek in you, you offer something valuable that goes beyond the basics. It could be that you deliver more value than the required level, or maybe the way you do what you do is interesting. You're compelling to those who are making decisions about you. Your name comes to mind because you're memorable. This gives you the opportunity to build relationships with people—people who count. When you are Distinguished, you stand out from your peers and start to build a fan club.

Demanded

When you move into the Demanded phase of branding, you move closer to being in a category of one. In addition to offering something beyond what's expected, what you offer clearly comes from you. You also start to build greater visibility and connections with people who matter. You turn your fans into promoters, and they in turn help spread your brand message. That means that your brand takes on a life of its own, which reduces the energy you have to invest in pursuing leads. You start to attract opportunities as opposed to always having to actively seek them. A distinct sign that you've reached this level is when people know who you are, but you have no idea how they know you.

Personal Branding 101: Authenticity

Part of moving through this continuum obviously relies on what you do every day (that is, the experience you create and value you deliver in every interaction you have) and how you do it. But the equally important part has to do with how you talk about it. How you tell your story—and tell the world—who you are and why they should care. I'll help you tell your story in chapter 3.

Now that you can picture the three phases, let's start unearthing the real you.

You can't build your online profile until you understand who you are in the real world. Before you start creating online content, I'm going to make sure you have all the supplies you'll need on your virtual branding journey. I'll share with you personal branding basics—the key things you need to know so you can stand out and fuel your career.

“Be yourself, because everyone else is already taken.”

—often attributed to Oscar Wilde

That quip sums up one of the most important tenets of personal branding. All strong brands are based in what's true. Genuine. Real. Disney injects family entertainment into their movies, theme parks, and products—bringing “magic” to everything they do. One-of-a-kind entrepreneur Richard Branson applied his passion for adventure and value of risk-taking to build the iconic Virgin brand. All strong brands are based in authenticity.

If you're like most people, when you think about personal branding, you're thinking about the sexy stuff—building your brand on the web, writing articles, delivering presentations, expanding your network, rivaling Beyoncé's Twitter followers. But if you aren't transparent about what makes you stand out, you'll squander your communications efforts. You must know yourself to grow yourself. That means being introspective. Strong brands know their values and passions, they have documented their goals, and they're fully aware of their superpowers—their signature strengths.

Your brand will topple if it sits on a foundation of inauthenticity. And you'll be worn out, too. Anne Morrow Lindbergh cautioned us when she said, “The most exhausting thing you can be is inauthentic.” That's because being someone you're not is hard work. It takes effort to wear a mask. Just ask the stars on Broadway who play a role eight times a week.

If you're disguising the real you, trying to be something you're not, you'll not only be exhausted, you'll be found out.

Girl, You Know It's True

Remember 1990s pop duo Milli Vanilli? Maybe not! Their debut album earned them a Grammy Award for best new artist. Once we learned that they were lip-synching to the music and that they couldn't sing, their Grammy was revoked and we haven't heard from them since.

Because branding is based in authenticity, you need to understand not only who you are but also what makes you compelling to your stakeholders (the people who are making decisions about you). As you think about what makes you you, consider these questions.



PONDER THIS

What makes you you?

- What are your top values—your operating principles or your nonnegotiables?
- What's your superpower—the thing you do better than anyone else?
- What energizes or ignites you? What are your true passions?
- Why do you do what you do? What's your motivation?

Do you have responses to all these questions? Which ones are the hardest to answer? Give a little extra attention to the ones that make you pause—the ones for which your answer is vague. Those are often the ones that yield the greatest level of learning. If one of these questions has you stumped, take the time to not only find an honest answer but also understand why you struggled to see it.

Personal branding is about being yourself—your best self—without excuses, apologies, or trepidation.

BRAND HACK

Remind yourself to be yourself.

Authenticity is essential, but sometimes it's hard to deliver it consistently. I compiled some brilliant quotes about being yourself.

Here are some of my favorites:

- “You were born an original. Don’t die a copy”—John Mason
- “It is the chiefest point of happiness that a man is willing to be what he is.”—Desiderius Erasmus
- “Live your truth. Express your love. Share your enthusiasm. Take action towards your dreams. Walk your talk. Dance and sing to your music. Make today worth remembering.”—Steve Maraboli
- “To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson
- “There is just one life for each of us—our own.”—Euripides
- “Too many people overvalue what they are not and undervalue what they are.”—Malcolm S. Forbes
- “Is life not a hundred times too short for us to stifle ourselves?”
—Friedrich Nietzsche

You can find my complete collection at www.careerblast.tv/authenticity. Choose the quote that resonates with you and post it somewhere you’ll see it as a reminder to be yourself—your best self.

Stand Out

*“So you’re a little weird? Work it! A little different? Own it!
Better to be a nerd than one of the herd!”*

—Mandy Hale, *New York Times* Bestselling Author

One of the most important distinctions in the world of personal branding is the difference between a brand and a commodity. Brands are unique. Desirable. Compelling. They connect with people emotionally and build loyalty. Commodities are interchangeable. If what you offer is the same as others who share your job title, you're a commodity, not a brand. And if you think of yourself as your job title, you're making yourself a commodity—replaceable by anyone else who shares that job title.

When I was living in London managing Lotus branding for IBM EMEA, I came across an amazing dry cleaner. They were amazing because they recognized a trend in professional attire for men—the loss of the necktie. They realized that men were wearing their shirts with the top two buttons open. The challenge with this new more casual style is that shirt collars would inevitably droop by lunchtime, making you look disheveled by the end of the day. In response, this dry cleaner triple starched that part of the shirt—stiffening the shirt to deliver a crisp look that lasted for the entire day. I would go out of my way, walking past numerous other dry cleaners to get to this one, and I would pay double the going rate for my specially starched shirts. They offered something that was not available from anyone else—something beyond what was expected.

That same offer of a unique experience is what you need to strive for as you build your brand. You want people to go out of their way to work with you and for them to pay you what you deserve for the unique value you deliver.

- ✓ DO THIS,
- ✗ NOT THAT

Do work your quirks. Understand what makes you stand out and integrate it into all that you do.	Don't think of yourself as your job title. If you do, you're a commodity, not a brand.
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If you use your job title to introduce yourself, you're doomed to mediocrity. And you'll forever have to fight to get noticed. Branding is all about the freedom (and the mandate) to differentiate.

Several years ago, I delivered a personal branding keynote in Bucharest, Romania. It was a great gig, and I was blown away by the audience's enthusiasm about brands and branding. The discussion after my presentation went into overtime.

One memorable participant shared this: "The reason we're so excited about brands is that branding gives us choice. Before the wall fell, we didn't have brands of soap; we just had soap. Today, we can choose which soap is right for us. Branding is about a freedom of expression. It's about making our own choice."

Choice Influences Success

Choice influences your ability to reach your goals. A hiring manager chooses you over other qualified candidates. A client chooses you to consult on a project. A director in another part of the organization chooses you to take a leadership role in her department. An employee chooses to apply for a job on your team because of your reputation.

In most instances, decision makers have a choice. You want them to choose you—yet many of us spend a lot of time trying to fit in. We fail to take advantage of our opportunity to be different. The key to successful branding is to stand out.

What Makes You Stand Out?

Let's face it, there are lots of other people with similar qualifications who do what we do. In only rare circumstances does someone fall into a professional category of one (the Queen of England comes to mind). Decision makers have to sort through the masses who seem to offer the same

services. When we focus on what we have in common with our colleagues, we become interchangeable. When we focus on our differentiation, we get people excited about us. But effective personal branding requires authentic differentiation. You can't manufacture a set of colorful differences based on what seems to get you noticed or generates media attention. Instead, you have to stand out by what makes you you.



PONDER THIS

What makes you stand out?

- What do people frequently compliment you on or praise you for?
- What is it that your manager, colleagues, friends, and clients come to you for?
- What adjectives do people consistently use to describe you—perhaps when they're introducing you to others?
- What makes the way you achieve results interesting or unique?
- What's the most unusual or quirkiest thing about you?

Once you understand what separates you from your peers and is relevant and compelling to those who are making decisions about you, think about how you can integrate more of that uniqueness into everything you do every day.

Don't think your brand differentiation needs to be something you acquire, or something directly related to what you do. Sometimes it's just part of who you are. On Hasan Minhaj's Netflix show *Patriot Act*, he is an outsider and insider—Indian, Muslim, American. In the world of American comedians, that's differentiation. Architect Dame Zaha Hadid, who is known for her gorgeous buildings with curvy forms, was the most famous female starchitect. Her gender helped her stand out.

“Work your quirks.”

That's the expression Deb Dib, the co-author of my last book, *Ditch. Dare. Do!*, came up with to remind us to exude our differentiation—always.

When you are able to do the job, you're the same as anyone else who meets the requirements. When you add extra value, you start to stand out, and people who want to work with you become your true fans. The ultimate achievement is when you move into phase three—that's when you turn fans into promoters. They become your full-time sales force touting how amazing you are.

Once you're clear about your differentiation, you need to communicate those traits to decision makers so they understand how you will provide value for them. The best way to become known by your differentiation is to integrate it into everything you do and make it visible to those around you. Here's how:

BRAND HACK

Use these three quick steps to brand integration:

1. **Document** the things you do frequently in a normal workday, from communications to the execution of projects.
2. **Think** about how you can integrate your differentiation into those tasks. I share an example in chapter 3 of a creative woman who did just that and garnered the kind of recognition that acts as a rocket booster for your career.
3. **Act.** Bring those quirks to the world stage, weaving them into your daily actions.

This approach will help you attract a well-defined group of decision makers and influencers you are genuinely excited about—and the feeling will be mutual.

Summing Up

In this chapter, I introduced you to the brand continuum and I hope inspired you to take action to become a brand in demand. You put time into

some deep reflections so that you know the key elements of your brand—your “why,” brand differentiation, superpowers, and other elements that make you irreplaceable. You can articulate your unique promise of value now that you’ve completed this chapter. But discovering your brand isn’t all introspection. In the “Know” phase, you need to learn what others think about you. Since your brand is held in the hearts and minds of those who know you, you must be keenly aware of external perceptions when you’re uncovering and defining your brand. In chapter 2, I’m going to help bring the process full circle. You’ll validate and refine your self-perceptions by getting feedback from others. Who are the “right” others, you might ask? Well, they’re the people who can help you reach your goals. I’ll share with you exactly who makes up that community so you can position yourself to influence them.

I find that the overachievers with whom I work are often impatient and eager to take action on building their brand. If that’s you, you might be tempted at this point to skip ahead to another chapter, but it won’t save you any time in the long run. To build an effective profile that delivers the results you want, you need to complete the Know phase of the personal branding process. It’s the only way to make good decisions about what to include, what to exclude, and what to highlight as you express the brand called you. The effort you apply up-front will yield tremendous rewards when it comes time to build your visibility. So relax and enjoy the journey.

Afterword

That's it!

Your brand has moved online and your potential for a wildly successful and fulfilling career has moved with it. When you master digital branding, you'll be truly real in the virtual world. That will help you build a community of fervent fans and promoters who can help you reach your goals. In my self-appointed role of chief encouragement officer, I provide this final advice to reinforce the key themes woven into this book:

- **Be of value.** When your efforts are founded in supporting others, you'll make a powerful and positive impact.
- **Be involved.** Strong brands don't go it alone. Be an active member of relevant communities.
- **Be consistent.** Strong brands are known for something, not 100 things. Be clear and consistent with your message.
- **Be constant.** You don't need to become a digital branding machine. Just commit to taking action regularly. Strong brands don't go into hiding.
- **Be a lifelong learner.** Social media and everything in the online world is evolving rapidly. Stay on top of what's happening so you can demonstrate your digital fitness.

And above all, **be yourself**. Authenticity goes a long way in the real and virtual world. Have the courage to be yourself—your best self—and watch your career soar.

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About the Author



William Arruda is a motivational speaker, bestselling author, and a leading authority on the topic of personal branding. He has been at the forefront of the field since its inception, teaching everyone from interns to senior executives how to harness the power of authentic personal branding. He is the CEO (Chief Encouragement Officer) of Reach—the global leader in personal branding—and the co-founder of CareerBlast.TV—a personal and digital branding video learning platform for innovative companies. He regularly shares his thoughts on workplace trends and branding in his *Forbes* column. When he's not traveling to deliver keynotes, he splits his time between New York City and Miami Beach.

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What's Your Story?

The most successful brands aren't created, they are unearthed. Successful branding is based on authenticity. So how do you reveal your own brand? First, by searching yourself for answers to questions like these: What do you do better than anyone? What are you most proud of? What makes you lose track of time?

In *Digital You: Real Personal Branding in the Virtual Age*, branding authority William Arruda describes the 21st-century world of personal branding and guides you to define, express, and expand your personal brand for the virtual world. Branding is not about being famous, Arruda explains; it's about being selectively famous. It's about more than social media excess. When you understand the true value of personal branding, you can use it as a serious career development strategy.

Digital You offers a deep dive to understanding and defining your unique promise of value—making a great first impression, mastering multimedia, and, ultimately, expanding your network and promoting thought leadership. You'll learn how to develop, design, and sustain a personal brand throughout the fluid movements of any career. Understand how to be clear about your digital brand and your unique promise of value so you can increase your success and happiness at work and in life. It's time to stop worrying about career extinction and start crafting a brand of distinction.

Praise for This Book

"If you know you need to develop your personal brand but just have no idea how to start, *Digital You* is the indispensable resource you need. It's packed with practical, manageable suggestions for how to clarify, articulate, and communicate your unique brand in a way that's authentic—and allows you to stand out from the crowd."

—GRETCHEN RUBIN

Author, *New York Times* Bestsellers *The Four Tendencies* and *The Happiness Project*

"Building your personal brand is like a video game: battles to be fought, prizes to be won, levels to be mastered. The thing is, you don't have any choice: You're playing whether you want to or not. You can trust William Arruda to be your guide and mentor through the new digital landscape."

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