

The Business Owner's Guide to Personal Branding



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Nucleus of change

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Overview

If you look on Twitter, @Virgin business brand has 231 thousand followers. But @richardbranson, 'tie-loathing adventurer, philanthropist & troublemaker, who believes in turning ideas into reality' has 11.2 million followers.

On LinkedIn, it's the same pattern. Richard Branson attracts 12.1 million followers and Virgin, his company, only 115k followers.

Why the personal brand attracts more followers than the business one? Simply because people buy from people. Richard Branson, the man, inspires more trust than the business brand. He can leverage his personal following to communicate his business message which will be received more favourably.

- What if you too could speak directly to millions of fans, hungry and eager to hear from you?
- What if these fans become the ambassadors of your business because they love your ideas and vision?
- What if your ideal clients were so engaged and willing to spread your message to their friends and network?

Personal branding allows you just to do that.

“Personal branding is the practice of people marketing themselves and their careers as brands”. – Wikipedia

“Personal Branding to me is summarised in defining a set of values by which you conduct yourself and be consistent with those in everything you do, in every way you express yourself, whether it's in written form, in a digital space, with a larger audience or in one on one interactions.” **Daniel Gurrola, Telco senior Executive**

It's about being who you are, be true to your values and stand up for what you believe in. And let other people know.

To build a strong personal brand as a business owner or CEO, you need to be visible and recognised as a trusted authority in your field.

You may already provide a lot of value to your clients and your immediate circle of influence, but few people in and outside your industry know about you and your business. So, you have a limited impact.

But to be visible, you need to be distinct, have a take/perspective in your field to inspire people to trust you, love your ideas and join forces with you.

This may look like a daunting task, but it is simpler than you think.

The main challenges that you face as a business owner today fall within one or more of these categories:

- You are stuck with low-paying clients and are looking for ways to attract high-paying ones
- You want to be an authority and be present in traditional and online media to share your message with a wider audience
- You are seeking to develop new projects aligned with your real values and want to enjoy more what you do

- You are looking to expand into new markets
- You want to delegate the non-critical tasks to others and build a high performing team
- You want to publish a book or build a speaker career but need to build an audience who love your ideas

Unless you know how to stand out in a noisy marketplace, the harsh reality is that you are going to struggle to rise up.

A Ground-breaking Way to Establish Trust

As a business owner, you understand how to sell your product or service. But how do you sell when you are the product?

This question elicits emotional issues, fears, and resistance for those who are not comfortable with this eventuality. But such blockages can be overcome to position yourself as the authority in your field. You can sell yourself without being 'sales-y.'

Have you ever wonder how some business owners and CEOs constantly get mentioned in traditional media and online, they are invited to speak at conferences for high fees and sign lucrative deals for their business whilst others high performing business struggle to get any visibility?

I interviewed personal branding experts, entrepreneurs and CEOs, to find out. This white paper explains our findings and the strategies that successful business owners use to attract lucrative opportunities rather than chasing them.

We also explain how any business owner could use the same strategies, using a ground-breaking step by step framework, **YEANICC™**, to get more and better clients, get paid more and make a bigger impact.

The Net Is Your Oyster

The online world is now a global village, with half of the population on the net. According to Statistica.com

Facebook , the biggest social network worldwide	1.94 billion global monthly active users
YouTube , the video-sharing platform	over a billion users
LinkedIn , the professional networking platform	467+ million members
Instagram , the photo-sharing app	700 million active monthly users
Twitter , the microblogging service	328 million monthly active users.
Snapchat , the emerging video sharing platform	166 million users with more than 10 billion mobile videos viewed per day

With such a wide market, you no longer have to limit your reach to a local network to find clients and partners. You can access a wider market, anywhere in the world with the click of your mouse. The net is your oyster!

But, instant access to the world also means a greater competition. There are millions of other qualified people who are hunting for the same opportunities and willing to work cheaper and faster. And old marketing techniques like the rest of business principles are changing fast.

Push Tactics No Longer Work

Business owners used to rely vastly on outbound marketing techniques to make their products and services known.

Push techniques such as ads, direct selling, TV were the main ways to get in front of millions of people and acquire new leads and clients.

Then digital platforms and especially social media came along, disrupting the very core business fundamentals. In 2016, Tech crunch reported that one ad blocker; [AdBlock Plus](#) was downloaded a billion times and installed on more than 100 million active devices.

Push tactics no longer work as it used to. According to a CBS article, we've gone from being exposed to about 500 ads a day back in the 1970's to as many as 5,000 a day today.

With this overload of publicity, customers have learned to switch off. So how do brands manage to get their message across? How does a business stand out in such a crowded environment to get noticed and thrive?

Simply, by leveraging the CEO or founder's Personal Brand like Richard Branson.

5 Common Personal Brand Roadblocks

The top five reasons that stop entrepreneurs from creating a personal brand are:

1. Deeply ingrained beliefs from culture

Branding is considered as superficial in certain cultures and environments. People believe that if they work hard enough, that should speak for itself and they will be recognised.

Nothing is farther from the truth. Today, anyone can use authoritative content to become an influencer.

You no longer need to wait for a book publisher to publish a book or to receive an invitation to appear on a TV show. You can share your content on YouTube.

You no longer need to wait for a newspaper to print your story. You can post your content on your blog, contribute on other influencers' blogs or write on platforms like Medium or LinkedIn.

2. I don't want to share my personal life

Building an authentic personal brand doesn't mean you should talk about your life. You do not need to share your private life online to be a respected influencer.

You only need to share what you believe in, your purpose, your vision, and your values. It's about being intentional in how you choose to present yourself.

As a rule of thumb, you should assume that anything you share online, will be in the public domain. But do share a mix of professional and personal information to show you are human.

3. I am too old

There is no age to start building your brand. I know a very successful CEO who at 80+ years old hired a consultancy firm to write his memoirs. They also create an online presence for him as a legacy for his children and grandchildren.

A lot of people have made a name for themselves after 40 and even later in life.

- Vera Wang, one of the world's premier women's designers was a figure skater and journalist before entering the fashion industry at 40.
- Julia Child worked in advertising and media before writing her first cookbook when she was 50, launching her career as a celebrity chef in 1961.
- Charles Darwin spent most of his life as a naturalist. But in 1859 at 50 years old, the "On the Origin of Species" changed the scientific community forever.

4. I don't have anything unique.

Your experience is your greatest lessons. What you've learned along the way gives you the authority to be the expert of your life. Everybody is on a different path. What you take for granted is something that someone else is struggling with and will be happy to pay to solve that problem.

Many people struggle to come up with something unique because they've been living for too long with themselves.

In the book '[Personal Branding in the Digital Age](#)', we suggest six different ways and examples to find your 'uniqueness'.

5. I sell tangible products; I don't need to be seen as an expert

Should you decide to become an expert rather than focus on creating real goods and services? Both are not mutually exclusive, in fact, they are complementary. A strong CEO brand reinforces a company's proposition.

Being an authority in your field allows you to talk more about your company and educate the consumers further.

8 Benefits of An Influential Personal Brand

Having a recognisable personal brand enables you as a business owner to focus on what matters to you.

You are more likely to:

1. Use your passion and skills to attract higher paying clients and choose to work with people you like.
2. Develop a distinctive identity and stand for what you believe in.
3. Take control of your life and make a bigger difference in the lives of others.
4. Be found by people who need your services or expertise and become the go to person.
5. Be visible and attract more opportunities to achieve your goals faster.
6. Be trusted by your prospects or anyone you are meeting. What do you do when you have a meeting with someone you have never met before? You google the person. Your prospects do the same. Finding you online reassures them that you are a genuine person that other people know and trust.
7. Get paid more as a consultant, speaker or executive. You become a credible source for information in your field.
8. Lead your niche doing what you love the most.

A personal brand helps to clarify your communication too. You are more likely to make a bigger impact with a clear message and achieve your wildest dreams.

It's ok to have a dream, but it's best to have a plan and the skills to make it come true. Most books and information on the internet provide a random list of things to build a personal brand without clear guidance.

Our comprehensive yet simple framework guides you step by step to think through what you need at each stage to create a personal brand that resonates with those you want to attract.

YEANICC™, A Step-By-Step Framework

Our study of the strategies that successful business owners use to get ahead in their activities reveals common patterns.

We have distilled our findings into a comprehensive step by step 7-pillar framework, **YEANICC™**, to create and enact your personal brand:

Pillar #1 Know Yourself

“The cost of not knowing yourself is simple: not living to your full potential.”

A strong personal brand starts by defining and communicating who you are. It requires being crystal clear about yourself, your passion and your motivation.

It's about clarifying your life purpose, your values and the standard you are willing to settle for. This first step helps you to know yourself deeper and create your personal mission statement using a series of questions and tools.

Daniel Gurrola, senior Telco executive

“I didn't think that the organisational values, and those of my manager, were aligned with the things that I believed in and deemed to be right. It's around this time that I've decided that this organisation was not for me. I wasn't thriving in this company, and that was putting myself and the way I conducted myself at stake.

I decided it was time to move on and when the decision came to move on, I embraced it. Today, I'm much selective about the organisations I talk to, about the people I would engage with and willing to work for.

It's now a guiding light to the way I want to lead myself.”

Self-assessment: How do you rate your mastery of the pillar # 1 'Master Your Expertise' on a scale of 0 to 10? 0 being not paying attention at all and 10 a total mastery

Pillar #2 Master Your Expertise

Following your passion is not enough to make an impact because, without real expertise, no one cares about what you have to say.

You need to clarify your passions, interests & skills and express what makes you unique.

If you are among a majority of people with 'Multiple Interest-Multiple Expertise & Careers' (MIMEC™) who struggle to find one path to stick to, this pillar will help you to find an overarching theme for your multiple interests and express it coherently.

Esther George is a Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Prevention Specialist who has transformed her passion for computers into a valuable expertise.

She works with international organisations, training prosecutors, judges and law enforcement on how to deal with cyber crime. She also works with businesses.

“Having a strong personal brand means that you do not have to advertise or cold call to get clients. A lot of people approach me as either a client, former client or even former colleagues have recommended me.”

Self-assessment: How do you rate your mastery of the pillar # 2 ‘Master Your Expertise’ on a scale of 0 to 10? 0 being not paying attention at all and 10 a total mastery

Pillar #3 Know Your Audience

Determine whom you care about, your ideal customer who values what you have to offer and is willing to pay you well.

Being selective allows you to get a deeper understanding of your audience’ issues and pick the problem that you are most passionate about solving to get results.

Riaz Kanani learnt a useful lesson from his early years in business. It doesn’t matter how cool your solution is if your customer doesn’t understand what it will do for them.

“We founded Digital Oxygen in 2000. At the time, video was extremely fragmented and difficult to use and what we had was a very easy to use technology that worked for all computers.

We naively thought we would easily win business. We were three times better than the nearest competition. That means anyone making money with video will make money three times more with our solution. So how possibly could they not buy this technology from us?

It didn’t happen. It turns out that technology can be scary to some people when the company is new, and it’s not yet the standard. So, we changed the business model to be more video advertising led rather than a licensing business. When we did that, and it was easily understandable, the business started to take off. We expanded and grew up very quickly.”

Self-assessment: How do you rate your mastery of the pillar # 3 ‘Know your Audience’ on a scale of 0 to 10? 0 being not paying attention at all and 10 a total mastery.

Pillar #4 Dominate Your Niche

Pick the market you want to play in and dominate. It means, understanding the ecosystem, the key players, and the competition. What role you want to play to be

the go to person in your field. You get to create a killer USP articulating why anyone should buy from you.

Milena Bottero moved from a struggling intern to founder of a home-sharing platform, Room for Tea.

“I figured out that if I weren't going to be paid, I'd rather do my own thing, so I created my own job.”

What started as a project picked up very quickly due to the high demand. Her pitch?

“Room for Tea is a peer to peer accommodation platform matching hosts and guests globally for mid-term stays.”

“We see a world where any young person who wants to move to a new city for a professional opportunity should be able to find affordable housing there.”

Having a strong brand has helped Milena to inspire trust, get people to use the platform and get free press in national newspapers.

Self-assessment: How do you rate your mastery of the pillar # 4 'Dominate your niche' on a scale of 0 to 10? 0 being not paying attention at all and 10 a total mastery

Pillar #5 Control Your Image

Taking control of your image and your reputation is essential. Just because you want to develop an authentic brand doesn't mean you should neglect your image.

In this pillar, you define how you want to be perceived. Choose the values you want to embody and the personality you want to project. What is your preferred style that best expresses who you are?

Jessica Gioglio, PR and marketing executive, shares her perspective.

“You don't have to be stiff. You can be human. Have a life and show that you're having fun; because if you're too stiff and boring who's going to pay attention to you? You need a mix of being professional but infusing personality and showing that you're a human as well.

When I do public speaking, I like to wear a strong colour. It depends on your audience. If I'm doing a private workshop at a more conservative company, I'll stay towards black or navy or something a bit more conservative.

Self-assessment: How do you rate your mastery of the pillar # 5 'Control your Image' on a scale of 0 to 10? 0 being not paying attention at all and 10 a total mastery

Pillar # 6 Connect with Authenticity

This is where you get the tools you need to connect with your audience in the most compelling way.

Pick your primary way of communication and the best social media channels. Make your voice heard and communicate your unique perspective.

You get to use various ways to tell inspiring stories that connect with your audience. You also create your digital assets, the cornerstone of a profitable online presence.

This pillar is all about designing a smart, engaging communication strategy.

Suki Fuller, analytical storyteller, shares how she uses various channels for different purposes.

Facebook is like my house where I only let a close group of friends and family in. People whom I've entrusted can come in.

Twitter is like my front lawn or a back garden. You can come into my garden or into my front lawn and on my porch, and occasionally you might say something I might not like, that's why you're not in my house. You could have a different opinion or be completely annoying. Occasionally you might do something that my neighbours don't like. I can pretty much tell you 'ok get off my lawn,' and shut the gate and you're not allowed to come back in.

LinkedIn is my office. That is where I put my professional connections. You can say things at work that you wouldn't say at my house. You can have your opinion, and you're entitled to that but still, maintain a level of professionalism.

The moral of the story is that you need to decide how to use each channel to get the best possible results.

Self-assessment: How do you rate your mastery of the pillar # 6 'Connect with authenticity' on a scale of 0 to 10? 0 being not paying attention at all and 10 a total mastery

Pillar #7 Build Your Community

"It's the followers, not the visionary, who bring the vision to life. Visionaries need followers as much as followers need a vision"- Simon Sinek

This last pillar helps you to establish and leverage an engaged community for an exponential reach.

You create strategic partnerships, build your 'success' network with an army of advocates and ambassadors that help you achieve your goals.

Russ Shaw is among the movers and shakers in London's tech sector. He is the founder of Tech London Advocates (TLA). He came up with what he calls a crazy idea after he left Skype back in 2011. He was about to turn 50 and wanted to do something different.

"I wanted to do something because technology and the tech sector have been very good to me, so I wanted to give back something."

“I thought this would be a fun project and literally from that point, my feet did not touch the ground. This thing just exploded beyond my wildest imagination.”

TLA is now a collection of 5000+ digital entrepreneurs, experts, financiers, investors and politicians committed to selling the capital as a world-leading technical business hub. It has also spread across 50 countries.

Self-assessment: How do you rate your mastery of the pillar # 7 ‘Build your community’ on a scale of 0 to 10? 0 being not paying attention at all and 10 a total mastery

How Do You Score?

The higher your scores, the closer you are to become a well-recognised expert more rapidly with a small boost. The lower your scores, the more work is to be done to position yourself as an expert in a sustainable way. The reality may be more nuanced where you score higher in some pillars and lower in others.

In all cases, don’t worry. Tools and strategies are available to help you make progress and reach your goals.

What Next?

How do you actually build an influential personal brand that attracts lucrative deals once you have scored higher in all 7 pillars?

The **NOC Executive Personal Branding programme**™ helps business owners and CEOs to create an authentic personal brand, aligned with their objectives. We:

- Clarify your vision and goals
- Audit the current personal brand
- Create a personal branding roadmap and appropriate marketing strategy
- Assist in creating a library of authoritative digital assets to dominate your field
- Provide tools, guidance, coaching to become a respected authority in your field

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About The Author

[Francine Beleyi](#) is a bilingual French-English digital strategist, communication, and marketing consultant and speaker who helps people and businesses thrive in the digital age. She is the author of the upcoming book '[Personal Branding in the Digital Age](#)', a practical book, written from her own experience as she journeys to find her authentic voice.

Francine also shares the stories of entrepreneurs, CEOs and branding experts from all walks of life who have used the concepts, tools, and strategies described to achieve success in their life and navigating challenging transitions.

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