

## What does your personal brand say about you?

*Javier Iglesias, Managing Director, IRC USA, Mexico & Brazil | Jul 9, 2020*

**Ever wonder what the impact of your reputation is? Think about the people whom you most admire. What do you find appealing about their combination of personal attributes, values, drivers, strengths and passions? It is this combination of things that define their reputation. So how about yourself? What word best describes you? Would it be the same word others use to describe you? If so, that word is most likely your reputation and your reputation is your personal brand.**



## Five Steps to Building a Personal Brand for Impact and Influence

Like it or not, you are a brand. You shape your brand with every interaction, every room you enter, hand you shake (or in the era of C-19 – fist you bump), picture you post, blog you publish, and comment you make. Your personal brand is NOT: your website, your social media profile, your resume or your business card.

Think of yourself in the same way that marketing leaders of the Fortune 50 think of their product and organization. What is it about my product or service that is different from others? The Fortune 50 marketing executives know the same thing that successful people know. A strong brand helps those assessing you decide whether to hire, promote or do business with you.

*An impactful and influential brand is clear and consistent  
both online and offline.*

It is also designed in such a way as to resonate with your target audience. Let me help you build a personal brand that distinguishes you from your competitors, colleagues and peers.

**The first step is gaining clarity on what your current brand is.**

Many people launch into this exercise by asking “*How do I create a personal brand?*” However, the reality is that you already have one. You need to think about the ONE WORD that best describes you. It must be clear, as you will need to be clear on how to live up to this word and for others to understand you in this same single word.

Ask your friends, colleagues and people who know you to describe how they see you as perceived in the marketplace. *Are you able to find alignment between their description and the word you chose? Is that word aligned with what you want and need in your working life? Is it aligned with how you accomplish your goals?* You need to be intentional in demonstrating and living that word in all that you do. That translates into how you dress, how you walk, what you do, and how you do it. In this world of constant change, your personal brand never changes. It can be the catalyst that will catapult you into the future, and ultimately become your legacy.

Know who you are, who you want to be, how you want to be perceived and what your TRUE-LIFE purpose is.

"THE WORLD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE ALL HAVE A  
PASSIONATE, DEEPLY PERSONAL SENSE OF PURPOSE"

**The second step is developing a Brand Statement.** Your brand statement is the future vision for your brand and you'll need to answer the following questions to create one.

- Who are you?
- What do you do?
- Where do you want to go?
- Whom do you serve?
- What skills or capabilities do you need to develop to do so?



As you reflect on these questions and arrive at answers, you'll need to distill it into a sentence or title statement much like the headline found below your name in a LinkedIn profile.

The LinkedIn headline is perhaps a good example for what a completed brand statement would be. LinkedIn allows a limit of 120 characters for a headline and by default creates your headline based on your current job title and employer. However, the truly discerning understand that you should never leave your brand headline to a computer default function. Doing so would be the equivalent of Nike's headline/brand statement being just a "retailer of shoes".

Your brand statement should state the who, the what and to whom. Here is an example of a possible brand statement for myself: "Servant Leader and Transformational Coach to Senior Leaders and Entrepreneurs". Once you have identified the ONE word best defining your purpose and a clear and concise brand statement, then you are ready to work on the story behind your brand.

### **The third step is creating your Brand Story.**

Every great brand has a compelling and awe-inspiring narrative behind it. The narrative can be told in a story that illustrates and even impacts or connects with us on an

emotional level. Effective storytelling is a very powerful tool. Through stories, we get to know people and the powerful brands we are loyal customers of. Think about the stories behind such iconic brands as Apple, Google, Nike and Amazon and think about the narratives they engage us within their marketing.

So, what is your story? Think about two or three key stories that define who you are today and write them down. This could be something as simple as a childhood memory or some challenge from your adult life. If you are coming up empty or have doubts about the ideas you arrived at; perhaps you should interview family and close friends to get their input.

Storytelling is key when marketing yourself in your professional life. We all have a story and an effective story behind how we evolved into the person we are today is what makes you more authentic, humble, personal and vulnerable. It is these basic human elements that are so powerful to connect and engage with others. It allows us an avenue in which to impact other people's lives and in so doing – continue to bolster our own personal branding.

You may not feel comfortable doing this but I encourage you to do it anyway. It is much like physical exercise to strengthen your body. This exercise will serve to make you more grounded in your identity and what you offer to others.

#### **The fourth step involves the effective marketing of your brand.**

Building a personal brand is much like building a business brand. Doing so effectively, you need to know your target markets, your marketplace, and which medium to use to get you the most relevant visibility. This step in the process takes time, some creative thought and concerted effort to build. You need to be driven and focused about the task and you need to understand how to best connect with your target audience. Setting into this task in an organized manner with your own unique originality will make you an effective brand ambassador of your own personal brand.

The digital or online platform is the most effective medium for developing a successful personal brand. First off, it's the most cost-effective and its today's leading medium for doing so.

For example, this article is one of my own tools for connecting with my target audience of executives and entrepreneurs. Writing this article allows me to give something back to the coaching side of my profession and the broader community of talent that both informs while also driving business.

You also need to learn how to promote yourself without resorting to shameless self-serving promotion.

It is okay to promote what you do well, but it is equally important to practice good business networking etiquette. Enter the “humblebrag”. You know the person who wraps an accomplishment inside of a “woe is me” – such as “*I’ve been nominated to another... but when will I find the time to....?*” It’s completely okay to promote yourself but success lies in *how* you do it. Perhaps the humblebrag would be better served by mentioning how proud he/she is of the collective contributions of their team that led to the successful nomination...? Self-promotion is completely within the rules of networking etiquette but should reflect your confidence in including others as well as being authentic in its reflection that no one succeeds completely alone.



If you truly care about a strong personal brand, you will also understand the importance that social media plays in developing it. Are you using all of the available channels (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and doing so most effectively? Is your story consistent? Are you using photos in your routine posts to convey a bit of who you are? Are you original in what you post? Are you relevant to your audience? The legendary mentor Jim Rohn summed it up well when he said, “*Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know.*”



### **The fifth and final step is effectively living & leveraging your Brand Value.**

Creating an impactful and influential personal brand for Impact and Influence is not a one-time-and-done kind of event. It is a bit like the quote, "*Happiness is found along the way, not at the end of the road.*" So in other words, leveraging your brand value is a constant daily exercise that requires you to be mindful of it as you live out your life.

Not so long-ago personal branding was more about collecting as many online followers and connections as possible. Today it is about being strategic in your brand reflecting what you're good at, being visible to the people who need what you offer and connecting with them where they are most likely to engage with you.

Effectively leveraging your personal brand will be an ongoing daily element of your life. As trends and media channels change, you need to be prepared to change with them. However, if you understand the basics of leveraging your brand's value; you can pivot as you need.

There are many ways to effectively live out your brand to engage with others in a way that resonates your value. Here are two critical elements of living your brand.

#### **Dress for Success**

Many people correlate "dressing for success" as being about formal attire such as business suits, however in reality it's about both your professional and personal leisure attire. What you wear says as much about who you are as it does about promoting and instilling healthy self-esteem and sense of confidence. Make no mistake, your choice of attire can help or hurt your cause. If you're in doubt, consider these points:

1. Take stock of your personal appearance and think about what it says about you. Are you putting effort into your appearance? Does your wardrobe set you apart or are you mirroring what you think everyone else is dressing like? Perhaps you should consider looking at photographs of yourself in your working attire. Is your clothing outdated, overly conservative or modern and how is it paired against the audience you are targeting? If so, it is time to cleanse your closet of any apparel that isn't in line with your desired image and personal brand.
2. Take your image and wardrobe off of autopilot. Too often I hear my coaching clients speak of their wardrobe choices as being based on anything but authentic. I hear of wardrobe choices based on what's on sale or because someone else told them they look great in a certain look, however, the result is that they don't feel like themselves with such choices. If you're like many people who struggle with a sense of style, maybe you should consider investing in a personal stylist. The

investment should facilitate choices in clothing and accessories that make you feel true to yourself, confident and consistent with the image you want to project to the world.

### **Communicating for Success**

Equally important to your choices in clothing is the way you communicate. I challenge you to consider what kind of “brand voice” you have. By brand voice, I’m referring to the collective aspects of the things you talk about and how you talk about them. Developing your brand voice is not an overnight exercise. Like your physical exercise routine, developing an effective brand voice takes a concerted effort. Here are some critical elements to take stock of when considering your brand voice:

1. **Vocabulary:** If you possess a significant body of experience and knowledge that is directly related to your chosen profession, then you should ask yourself how well developed your vocabulary is. Researcher Johnson O’Connor found that a person’s vocabulary level is the single most important predictor of occupational success. A well-developed vocabulary improves reading comprehension and makes you a more effective communicator both orally and in writing.
2. **Know to whom you speak:** Your personal brand is enriched by strong communication skills which comes in part from understanding who you are communicating with. It is important to understand your audience’s motivations and style of communication (when possible) and through that adapt your message to enhance the odds of getting your desired result. Empathy is critical to gaining a personal connection. It’s empathy that makes people feel comfortable and trust you. And by “personal connection”, I’m referring to a genuine connection, not one that exploits your target audience.
3. **Body language:** Nonverbal communication is of equal importance to what someone says. The advent of virtual meetings is often so much more effective than an email or phone call for that very reason. Your posture, facial expressions and hand gestures all play a role in how your message is either affirmed or undermined – and therein your brand either enhanced or diminished.
4. **Active listening:** Think about the balance of your typical conversations. Are you really listening to them or are you thinking through what you plan to say next? Developing an empathic connection requires active listening. Do you ask follow-up questions to ensure you fully understand the message or to demonstrate you are paying attention?
5. **A projection of your brand:** Along with all the elements I just mentioned, this one is equally important – be positive and respectful. Strive to keep your ego out of your communication. As a manager or leader, your communications should be



transparent, fair and respectful even in contentious situations. Whenever possible, avoid using your position, fear or coercion to achieve your means. The contagious optimist is far more effective at enhancing creativity, morale and problem solving than a belligerent autocrat.

Think of yourself as your very own Chief Marketing Officer and become conscious that how people see and react to you is a direct reflection of how YOU project yourself. It is your brand and your brand is manifested in how you look, interact and communicate with others. In addition to a healthy sense of self, a healthy personal brand should help facilitate the self-direction of your career without having to depend on others.

*Are you doing what you need to do to improve how the world sees you?*



**Javier Iglesias** is a Managing Director with IRC USA, Mexico & Brazil (The ExeQfind Group) and is both a strategic advisor and coach to clients and candidates alike. Javier's career foundation evolved to successful HR leadership roles with Ingersoll Rand coupled with extensive professional development from Cornell University, Thunderbird School of Global Management, Tecnológico de Monterrey and IPADE. Javier has extensive experience in multicultural business settings and has held leadership roles throughout the US, Mexico and Brazil.