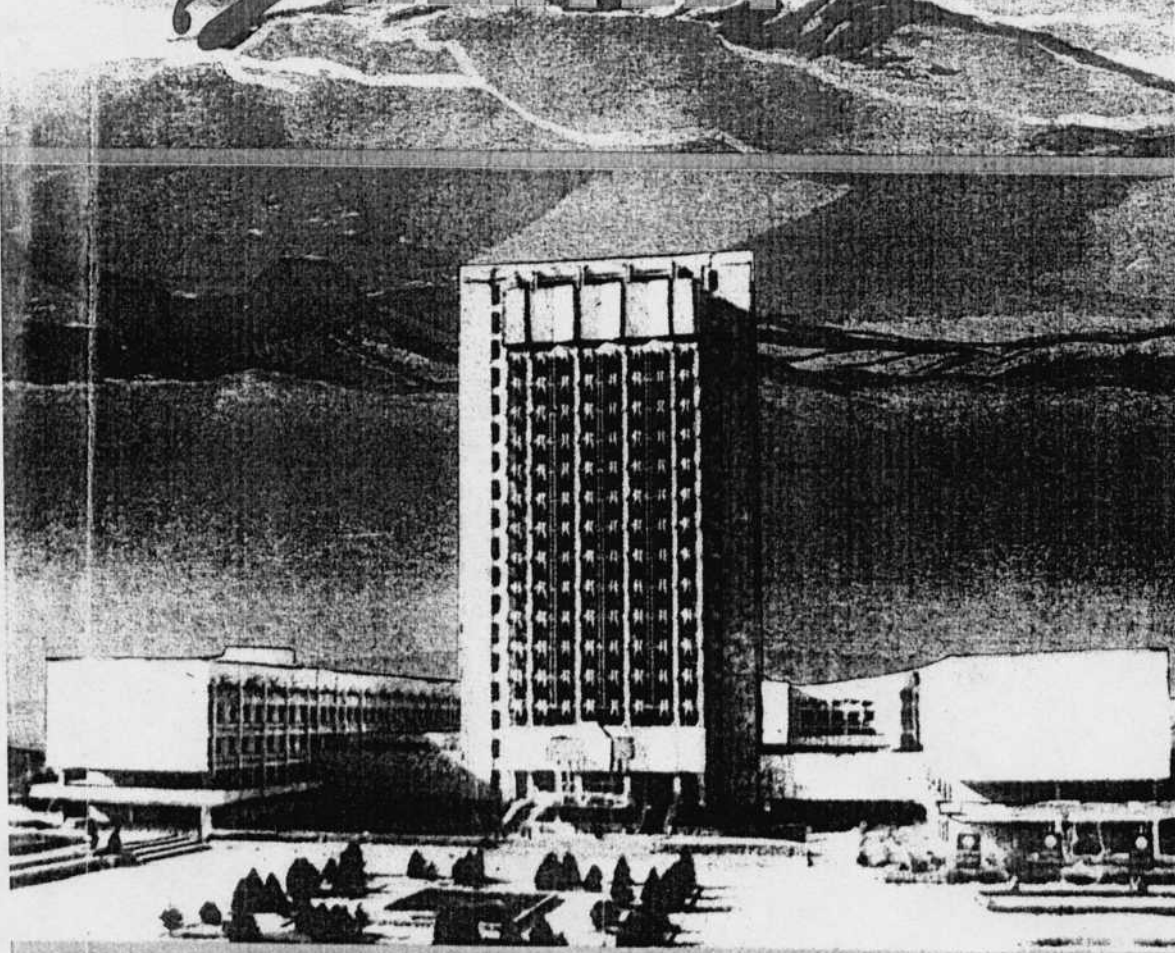
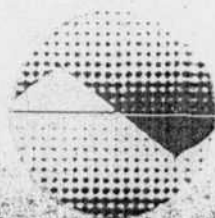


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КІМЕР - КІМЭП

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD - BE A BRAND! ВЫДЕЛИСЬ ИЗ ТОЛПЫ - СТАНЬ БРЕНДОМ!

Abstract: Branding is essential; personal branding is vital for individuals to stand out especially in a crowded job market and businesses. Based on an interview survey, answers in terms of simple yet effective steps in branding or self-marketing oneself are detailed here.

Key words: Self-marketing, personal branding

Introduction. The purpose of this paper is to indicate the benefits of being a brand and outline the key steps of personal branding. If a brand is seen as a distinction, "to distinguish the goods of one producer from another" (Keller, 2003: 3), personal branding can be taken as being different and standing out in the crowd. So a professional seller, a sales warrior, will stand out in a sea of salespeople (Yermekbayeva & Low, 2005).

Research Methodology. Semi-structured interviews were relied on. A sample size of twenty-nine interviewees was selected for this study. The research sample consisted of students from higher institutions (52 percent) and business professionals (48 percent) in Almaty.

The average interview lasted thirty minutes. Interview survey responses were recorded and reviewed by content analysis.

Becoming the Best Brand. From the interviewees' input, the researchers gather that professionals need to be a brand, and they gave their reasons. To them, "being a brand" boosts their success factor. "To be brand" helps them to:

- survive and succeed in the world of business change and competition. [They want to be relevant in their respective fields.]
 - stand out of the crowd, "differentiate and position" (interviewees' input, 27 interviewees or 93 percent used these words).
 - increase self confidence
 - consciously manage own "consumers", "products/services" and "competitors".
- Interestingly these also coincide with what has been indicated by Pettis (2003).

The findings also lend support to the view that by standing out, professionals or business persons would actually:

- view the world and things from different or fresh perspectives.
- understand themselves better via defining their unique strengths, advantages, values, vision and purpose.
- recognize where they are now, and where they want to go or be
- identify and effectively use or enhance their competitive edge
- get jobs that best fit them/ personality-job match [this point also coincides with Kunkhozhayeva, Bergeneva and Low's (2005) study]
- attract people and get quality employees
- make friends and allies, and work with good partners (Nartaev and Low, 2005)

- grow their career and personal opportunities
- secure higher income

The findings show that most interviewees stress on “having goals, targets or vision” (interviewees’ input, 62 percent used these words). “Professionals should also know their strengths and capitalize on them”. “They need to position themselves well” (interviewees’ input).

Arruda (2003) amplifies these findings when he outlines these steps:

Step 1: “Unearth Your Brand”

Give your brand context: Arruda (2003) advises to look at external and internal sides of a person. The external is a **vision**, like a vision that every company should have. Vision is how one sees oneself and the world around. The **purpose** is an internal role one plays in a vision. The **goals** should be set based on how one see oneself in a year, 3 years, 10 years. Vision, purpose and goals should be set in order to understand and develop the brand.

Know Yourself: It is critical to know oneself, one’s strengths, weaknesses, values, differentiating factor, and special traits (24 interviewees or 83 per cent spoke of “knowing oneself”, “one’s strengths” or “unique traits”).

Know Your Rival: To be able to stand out of the crowd, one should understand and examine one’s competitors, in order to be different from them.

Know Your Target: As in the business world, the first thing to know about the marketing of the product is to define the target audience, its preferences and expectations. The same is with personal branding, one ought to know who the target is. This target will receive one’s special messages, and buy one’s “products” or “services”.

Step 2: Express Yourself:

Describe the essence of your brand: Personal brand profile should be created based on the results from Step 1. There should be indicated brand attributes, brand statements and other relative elements of brand equity.

Find the right mix: In business, the brand manager will identify marketing communications based on the knowledge of the product, target audience and competitors. Personal branding uses similar tools according to personal goals.

Mark or associate everything you do with your brand: It is advisable to communicate one’s brand to every event, situation and action. For example, in a written paper the “brand” – the name of the author should be indicated. Authors should work to get bylines and their works published.

Life and breathe your brand: The brand should be integrated throughout actions, words and appearance. It should be “seen and felt” from the first sight. For instance, the image, the style and behavior of a “vamp-woman” should coincide. In short, act and flesh it out. Here, the researchers would also add and to paraphrase Burnett’s (1995) words that, when one reaches for the stars one may not quite get one, but one would not come up with a handful of mud either.

Step 3: Evaluate and Evolve

Evaluate: Like any project, campaign, meeting, the brand should be evaluated through one’s special measures. The purpose is to see how well was these or that objectives, to compare result.

Evolve: The world is constantly changing; therefore, the brand should also change to move at least hand-in-hand with others. Target is changing, and besides, the brand should change to fit and satisfy the target’s needs.

Alternatively, more simply put is Low’s (2005) views that match the research findings. Low (2005) speaks of being **RED**, that is, one needs to position oneself as:

- **Being Relevant:** Be real to people, understand people and give them what they want or see as relevant. In doing so, one would then add value and relevance to others (Here, 19 respondents or 66 percent of the interviewees expressed relevance as a key component of personal branding).

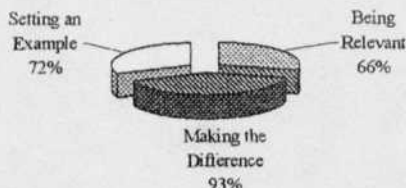
- **Setting an Example:** Be a role model and inspire others (21 interviewees or 72 percent agreed with this, several spoke of the relevance of it within the Asian context. It is said that setting an example is more critical in Asia).

- **Making the Difference** - be a leader (27 interviewees or 93 percent agreed to this notion). Rely on one's personal power, build your confidence and change the world, or at least paint RED the world around oneself, one's immediate world.

A classical example of personal branding, to the writers, is that of Richard Branson, who is the founder of Virgin Air. He certainly has a nose for business, and his brand can be seen as being entrepreneurial, fun and adventurous. In Kazakhstan, a good example of personal branding is Nursultan Nazarbayev, the president of the Republic of Kazakhstan. To some, his personal brand stands for great care of the citizens, the love of his motherland, and for leading his people towards a better tomorrow.

Conclusion. Overall, to paraphrase Burnett's (1995: 87) words, good selling needs involvement and relevancy, but in today's advertising din, unless one makes oneself noticed and believed, one really got nothing. In growing personal branding, one cannot be passive or leave things to chances. Indeed, one really needs to proactively self-market oneself. It is critical to firstly set one's vision, mission and goals; define strengths and advantages that make one different from others. The results of the first step should then be communicated to the right target audience, factoring in the competition. Finally, the results should be properly assessed and adopted to the changing environment. Personal branding indeed helps one to stand out of the crowd.

Figure 1 shows the various percentages of respondents indicating Low's (2005) key Components of Personal Branding



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