



## **‘Brand You’: Improve your Personal Profile**

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Balancing work and family can sometimes leave us apologising for ourselves; feeling we are ‘making up’ for our deficits on all fronts. Do you find yourself only noticing the downsides? In this Insider Guide we look at personal branding and its challenges.

**“Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.” Oscar Wilde**

**“Too many people overvalue what they are not, and undervalue what they are.” Malcolm Forbes**

The life transition to becoming a parent or a carer can feel like a defining moment in your career. But now, more than ever, you need to raise your profile in order to progress and stay on track, whilst becoming the parent or carer you want, or need, to be.

Identifying your particular contributions and strengths helps you gain the confidence and assurance to communicate in a way that is proactive and business-focused.

This Insider Guide gives you a structure for thinking and talking about your 'Brand' in the context of work and family. It provides coaching frameworks, practical tips and expert advice that will help you:

- Identify and 'own' your core qualities, values and capabilities
- Acknowledge and describe your achievements – past and present
- Transfer the skills you have improved or acquired through combining family with work.

## **What is 'Personal Branding'?**

Personal Branding is about knowing what you have to offer and finding ways of communicating this to the right people. It's not about becoming arrogant or pushy, but simply balancing out the tendency many of us have to take our strengths for granted; particularly when we feel most challenged by the amount we have on our plates.

Personal Branding has to offer messages that are true and differentiating, not bland or generic. Some people prefer to think of their personal brand as more of a personal narrative, personal statement or summary of strengths. Your personal profile has to be authentic and powerful, not boastful. If something is honest and said in a matter-of-fact way, it never sounds boastful.

In the contemporary workplace you need to be aware of your social media footprint; your online personas via LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. All of these provide exposure and reflect on you as a brand. How do you use these platforms?

Networking is most useful when we are making useful noise. For example, forwarding interesting articles and entering into dialogue with colleagues. Integrating this into our daily lives can keep our profile high at times when we are less available to attend lunchtime or evening events.

## How is Personal Branding relevant to managing work and family?



It's all too easy for your personal brand to take a dent when you have family commitments. You may find yourself apologising or asking favours of your colleagues or employer. You may be working flexibly or remotely and feeling like you are less present.

Your guilt reflex may kick in when you have to leave work on time, or when you're not available for a meeting on the day you're not working. Ask yourself, how would you respond if you had a work clash and needed to leave for an offsite client meeting?

There may be assumptions made on either side, what do others now think about your ability or ambition and equally what do you think others are thinking? Do you really know what people are thinking? Most of this perception is fantasy. Sneaking out of the office because you have to leave early is likely to get more comments than a confident goodbye.

To avoid confused messages, you need to be clear on what it is you want and how to convey it. Remember to communicate your successes with your team and beyond.

## What are the challenges?

These are key challenges that get in the way of building your Personal Brand:

- Feeling uncomfortable with saying something positive about yourself... the cringe factor!
- Being able to see yourself objectively
- Finding messages that are differentiating, not generic
- Integrating the notion of branding or raising your profile into your day-to-day routine, rather than seeing it as 'an extra thing to do'
- Understanding that your profile is not static - regularly review and hone it.

## Action 1: My 'Brand' ...so what?

### 1. Write down some information about who you are – your values, strengths and attributes.

- What do you care about?
- What gets you out of bed in the morning?

### 2. What are the advantages of working with and for you?

- What do others say they appreciate about you?
- 360 degree feedback – which usually includes feedback from colleagues and supervisors, along with a self-evaluation.

### 3. Put an asterisk by the two or three things that are key to what differentiates you from others.

- Try to understand the essence of who you are. This step involves looking at yourself from the inside
- Give yourself time and, if you get stuck, reflect on feedback you have received from colleagues, friends, a mentor or a client
- Can you add a meaningful metaphor, image, song, motto or simply a couple of words you can focus on?



## Action 2: Story telling

- Think of a time when you were performing at your peak - what were you thinking and feeling?
- What were you actually doing to ensure this success?

This will give you a structure for thinking about your 'Brand'. It will help you shift your focus away from viewing parental leave as an unfortunate absence from work (or parenthood as negatively impacting) and towards recognising the strengths you are bringing back to work – both those you had before and new ones you have developed.

Useful sentence openers to hone your message:

- **You know when...**
- **Well I am the one who...**
- **Which means that...**

This is fun and can be used in everyday conversation easily. An example might be:

- **You know when** all hell breaks loose in the office and there is a panic and everyone is flapping around
- **Well I'm the one who** gathers the team together and provides clear focus
- **Which means that** teams work far more effectively and productively.

## Further information

To find out more personal branding related information, please see the resources below.

Resource	Website	Contact
Jennifer Holloway	<a href="http://www.jennifer-holloway.co.uk/">www.jennifer-holloway.co.uk/</a>	N/A
Reinventing You <i>Book by Dorie Clark</i>	<a href="http://dorieclark.com/reinventingyou/">dorieclark.com/reinventingyou/</a>	N/A

### Recommended Service



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