

# Branding Pays™

The Five-Step  
System to Reinvent  
**Your Personal Brand**

**Karen Kang**



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Best-selling author of *Crossing the Chasm*

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# Introduction



# The Importance of Reinventing Your Personal Brand

Personal branding—that is, creating your image and guiding your reputation—has never been more important than it is today. Why? Because globalization and social media have made the world smaller, more connected and infinitely more competitive. Your competition for a job or business opportunity may be anywhere in the world—at the desk next to you or continents away. It has never been more important to differentiate yourself from the pack.

My own corporate and personal branding business provides a great example of how everyone is competing for jobs and clients globally. Years ago, most of my service providers and clients were within a 20-mile radius of my Palo Alto, California, office. Today, I use a webmaster in Kuwait, a programming team in India and Los Angeles and a PR firm in Texas, and have clients in Asia, South America, Europe and throughout the United States. Word-of-mouth references are important, but so is one's web presence—being found by search engines and standing out in a crowded and noisy market.

In addition to global competition, there has been a tidal change in how new technologies have affected our businesses and lives. I now rely on such technologies as social media, web services for collaboration, cloud storage, videocasting, ebooks and webinars that were not in my vocabulary 10 years ago. Instead of listening to CDs and broadcast radio, I listen to music and podcasts on my iPhone or use a web music service. Instead of going to a brick-and-mortar bank, I use my smartphone for deposits, transfers and paying bills. In every industry, old ways of doing things are being replaced by new ways.

What does all this change mean for you? There is a tremendous opportunity to position your personal brand to take advantage of the shifts in the business landscape. It's not good enough to maintain the status quo. Just as businesses need to reinvent themselves for new markets, you need to reinvent yourself for new career opportunities. Pumping up the volume with a purely tactical approach may create awareness of your current brand, but it may not entice anyone to offer you a new opportunity.

You need to be strategic. Reinventing your brand for new opportunities requires an understanding of market forces, your own assets and how you need to be positioned in the new world order. Think of yourself as a free agent—no one else is looking out for your best interests but yourself. You need to be crystal clear about who you are and the value you bring to a world where constant change is the only norm.

If you want to stay competitive, you need to ask: Do I have a personal brand that gives me an advantage in today's world?

**In short, brand yourself, or be left behind.**

## Anyone Can Master Personal Branding

Personal branding is not rocket science. Creating the image that defines your unique value is something anyone can master. It's not just the purview of branding gurus and social media mavens.

Unfortunately, few understand what it takes to build a strong brand—online or offline. Some may be defeating themselves by promoting a weak image and a me-too message to an audience that doesn't care.

The best companies go through a rigorous process to develop the strategy to market and brand their products. But, as individuals, we often lack the understanding, the process or the tools to develop a strong brand strategy. I wrote *BrandingPays™: The Five-Step System to Reinvent Your Personal Brand* to fill this need. The focus of it is on building a brand positioning strategy and developing your image and key messages, but it also includes many practical tips for implementation.

I want to help you feel confident in branding yourself. Personal branding is a skill that will pay huge dividends throughout your life and career.

## What's Inside *BrandingPays*

*BrandingPays: The Five-Step System to Reinvent Your Personal Brand* is an excellent guide for:

- Professionals who want to get a job or new position, change careers or get promoted
- Recent graduates looking for a new job or position
- Entrepreneurs who need to brand both themselves and their companies

The book lays out the practical BrandingPays Five-Step System for personal branding. This methodology makes branding as easy to understand as “Bake the cake, then ice it,” a metaphor I use to talk about the rational value (cake) and emotional value (icing) that make up strong brands.

I've highlighted lessons and examples from my 20-plus years of branding experience and included insightful anecdotes and case histories from both companies and individuals. The book is filled with templates, graphic examples, action lists and URLs for online resources.

Throughout this book, I've included examples and stories based on real people. In most cases, I've used pseudonyms and changed some identifying circumstances to protect their identities. A few of the examples are composites.

Since our brands will change over time, we all need to be good at refreshing them. Use this book as a reference throughout your career to reinvent yourself for new opportunities.

### Chapter Focus

**Chapter 1** defines personal branding and introduces concepts that will help you to get more out of the BrandingPays System. This chapter introduces the cake-and-icing metaphor to help make branding more understandable. We'll have fun looking at celebrity brands and start you thinking about your own cake and icing.

**Chapter 2 through Chapter 6** lay out the BrandingPays System. A chapter is devoted to each of the five steps.

**Chapter 7** looks at how to implement a 360-degree brand.

**Chapter 8** examines the fundamentals of social branding and how you can guide your brand when you can't always control how others represent you visually or through words.

## My Story

I'd like to share my story with you in the hope that you will be inspired to develop your own brand. At the end of this book, I've also included a number of inspirational stories of people who have succeeded in business and personal branding in spite of being seen as outliers.

My roots are humble. I am a Korean American who grew up on a small family farm. In the early 1900s, my grandfather was recruited from Korea to work the sugar cane fields in Hawaii. My grandmother, from whom I got my independent nature, ran away from her affluent home in Pusan, Korea, to escape an arranged marriage. When her audacious dream of a university education did not pan out, she became a "picture bride" to my grandfather, a perfect stranger.

My dad was a high school dropout with tough-guy tendencies and my mom was a well-read and artistic soul. (I guess opposites attract!) They were an unlikely couple to become farmers, something they knew nothing about. But it was hard to say no to my grandmother, the one-time picture bride and family matriarch. She believed that Dad, who was a pushover beneath his bad-boy image, should leave his job as a merchant seaman and buy a farm in Oregon for a better life for his young family. And so it was.

As a family, we planted and hoed cabbage fields, picked strawberries and tended to our sometimes struggling farm. For entertainment, I grew up playing with mud pies and exploring the backwoods. We had riding horses, but there were no ballets, no operas or violin concertos in our provincial lives. We were a happy family, but I dreamed of a life beyond our little farm.

When I was seventeen, I got a scholarship to attend Mills College, a private all-women's college, in Oakland, California, which I later learned was where my mother had hoped to go to school. What I loved about Mills, beyond its proximity to the cultural delights of San Francisco, was its diverse community and the philosophy that women could become whatever they wanted. Mills encouraged me to follow my passion and make a difference in the world. This belief has become the bedrock for my personal brand.

You could argue that I am the poster child for reinventing one's personal brand. I started my career with newspaper journalism jobs beginning with an internship at a newspaper in Paris (France) during my junior year abroad. I did a stint as a reporter at *The (Portland) Oregonian* soon after graduation from Mills. Hoping to land a reporting job on the East Coast, I attended Boston University's graduate program in journalism. My BU degree and Oregonian clip file helped me to get a newspaper reporting job just outside of Boston. I must have done a good job of branding myself because, to my knowledge, I was the only one in my Master's program who had a job offer at graduation. (However, my BU colleagues did get journalism jobs later).

Returning to California after two years in Boston, I participated in the exciting growth of high tech marketing as a practitioner and later as an executive with agencies for public relations and advertising. I helped launch new companies and positioned them for successful initial public offerings (like Maxtor, which is now a Seagate brand), introduced industry-changing technologies and participated in creating new markets. Each time I changed jobs, I had to reposition myself to be seen of value to my new employers. For example. I have positioned myself at various times as a former journalist turned PR pro, a PR exec who could sell new programs to advertising clients, an ad agency exec with integrated marketing leadership, and a marketing strategist who could bridge strategies to implementation. Today, through my client work and social media reputation, I am positioned as a brand strategist for corporate and personal branding.

## Building on the Thought Leadership of Regis McKenna and Geoffrey Moore

My real fortune was being hired by Regis McKenna Inc. (RMI), the eponymous firm of the marketing and brand guru, which did landmark brand positioning for Apple, Intel and Genentech. My orientation included being embedded in RMI's Apple account team to learn first-hand the secrets of an Apple product launch. Many of these proven techniques—such as positioning, messaging and influencer (ecosystem) briefings—have been optimized for personal branding in the BrandingPays™ System. To prove that nothing is new under the sun, I have built upon these techniques as well as the positioning and relationship marketing concepts that were originally conceived by Regis McKenna, a true marketing visionary.

During my six years doing strategy consulting at RMI as a principal and partner, I enjoyed working with many of the best and the brightest consultants and clients. One of the RMI partners was Geoffrey Moore, the best-selling author of the marketing classic *Crossing the Chasm*. Geoff and I teamed on a number of strategy consulting projects at RMI. I am happy to say I'm still learning from him during our friendly breakfasts at Buck's in Woodside, California.

One of the most dramatic rebranding examples in my life occurred during my venture into the Italian vacation business in 2004. During a two-year hiatus from Silicon Valley marketing consulting, I became co-founder and president of an Italian vacation company (our tagline: "Savor the Real Italy"). I immersed myself in everything Italian—language, culture, fashion, food and travel—and became trusted as an Italy expert among friends and potential clients. Building a successful brand in Italian travel taught me that personal branding and company branding are synergistic, especially if you are an entrepreneur.

I came back to consulting because, as a recent entrepreneur, I wanted to help other entrepreneurs understand the importance and power of branding their businesses and themselves. I created the BrandingPays System first for companies, but soon understood its applicability to people. The fact that I work with both companies and individuals is a plus. I can bring the discipline of corporate branding to individuals and the consumer and social media insights from personal branding to companies.

Over my career, I've consulted to or trained more than 150 companies—from Fortune 500 to start-up firms—and thousands of professionals on developing a compelling brand. The BrandingPays System has helped many individuals get their dream job or accelerate their career success. My dream is that all professionals learn both the art and science of personal branding, because it will yield dividends throughout their lifetime.

Personal branding is not as easy as filling in the blanks. If you truly want to stand out, you will have to be aware of your environment (the market, the trends and the competitive opportunities) and think critically about what assets you have and how to leverage them to your advantage. If you are willing to put in the time and effort, you will be richly rewarded. A strong personal brand can help you get a job, a promotion, investor funding or new clients.

Your brand is arguably your most important asset. Isn't it worth investing in?

# **Take Charge** of Your Personal Brand



## Branding a Political Candidate

After residing in Palo Alto for seven years, Hillary Freeman decided to run for City Council in her California hometown. A devoted wife, soccer mom and public schools volunteer, Hillary worked as a high-tech sales executive in Silicon Valley. Having moved to Palo Alto from Los Angeles, she loved the character and charm of her adopted city.

However, Hillary had a challenge. Home to Stanford University, Palo Alto was a community of well-educated, high-income and predominantly white citizens. Blacks represented less than 2 percent of the population at the time—and Hillary Freeman is African American.

Although politically progressive, Palo Alto, like any place, was not immune to racial prejudice. At a Hillary Freeman campaign event early in the race, for instance, a newspaper photographer took her photo and, thinking she was a volunteer and not the candidate, asked where she lived.

“Palo Alto,” she replied.

“You mean *East Palo Alto*,” he said, since many believed the only blacks in town were from East Palo Alto, a neighboring town that had a reputation for drug-related violence.

In order to meet her goal, Hillary needed to get past racial stereotypes and the fact that she had no political experience. Working with her as the campaign strategist, we created a brand that positioned her as the face of new leadership in Palo Alto—a high-tech exec whose business skills and empathy could align city policies with community values. Hillary, her campaign team and I strategized to match Hillary’s unique strengths with the needs of the community. We paired the critical issues facing Palo Alto with the need for a City Council member who had a business background to tackle budget issues, along with the values of a mom with school-age children (education, libraries and sports fields) and a homeowner concerned about balancing the needs of development with neighborhood character. We built a coalition of stakeholders who were invested in her success because her campaign spoke to their needs and vision for Palo Alto. By focusing on shared values and her education (BA and MS degrees), Hillary seemed like “one of us” and not a black outsider.

During the campaign, Hillary went from being an unknown minority volunteer to an exciting candidate who best represented Palo Alto ideals. The results of Hillary's campaign and brand transformation were stunning. She not only won a seat on the City Council, but also was the highest vote-getter in a field of 13, besting two incumbents and ousting the sitting mayor. Hillary had to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds to reach her goal. She is living proof that branding does pay.

## What Is Personal Branding?

“What does a political race have to do with personal branding and my goal of getting a job or investor funding?” you may ask. Whether competing in politics, in the job market or against other entrepreneurs, you need to stand out and prove that you are the best choice—just like a political candidate.

**The perfect storm of extreme competition for jobs and the explosion of social media has propelled personal branding from a “nice to have” to a “got to do.”**

For professionals, a strong personal brand is the key to influence, opportunities and advancement. For recent graduates, personal brands can be the difference between getting a job and ending up in the circular file. For entrepreneurs, a personal brand that inspires confidence can be the edge that propels investors to fund you.

Yet many people haven't a clue as to what personal branding is or what to do to achieve a brand. Many think that personal branding is merely cosmetic. There's a saying that goes, “You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig.” This is true of personal branding. You can put on a new suit, but if you lack substance or content, people will see the makeover for what it is—shallow and lacking real proof of change.

Regis McKenna, Silicon Valley brand guru and my former boss, put it best when he told me in a recent email:

My concern is that “personal branding” only works if there is valued content. Example, when Steve Jobs left [Apple] he was often compared to Adam Osborne and Nolan Bushnell—people who blew it. His credibility was zero as far as personal computing was concerned even after he rejoined Apple in 1998. People only sat up and took notice when the iMac (the multi-colored editions) took off and Apple returned to growth and profitability.

Profitability and growth are the two best marketing programs a company or its leader can use to gain leadership. You may recall that I used to quote Tevye from *Fiddler on the Roof*. “If I were a rich man, I would sit in the temple and lecture to the wise man all day long and it wouldn’t matter if you know or not, when you’re rich, they think you know.”

I can’t agree with him more. When you have the goods, it’s a lot easier to brand yourself and to get recognized. But having the goods isn’t all. You need to position what you have to your best competitive advantage.

What if you are just starting out, or if you are weak on evidence that sets you apart? Mia is an example of how you can build your evidence from scratch. Hers may not be the model for everyone, but it does demonstrate how far you can go with strong aptitude and hard work. Mia got her college degree in theater and had thought she wanted to be an actress. However, after taking a career aptitude test, she decided she was better suited to a career in web design and development. Luckily for her, new web programming standards meant that her learning curve was not that much steeper than that for experienced developers.

Mia self-studied with the latest web programming books and spent six months writing sample programs with the help of an experienced mentor. When she felt ready, she priced her services right and got a contracting job in web development with a small professional services firm. As she worked to build her portfolio, she positioned herself on LinkedIn as a front-end web developer with strong consumer understanding (from her retail jobs and acting) and artistic sensibility (evidenced by her theater design and art background). Her LinkedIn profile attracted job recruiters and she landed a full-time job with a mobile web software start-up doing customer-facing web development—the cool interactive stuff you see on mobile screens. Even if you have little to work with, you can dramatically reinvent your brand the way Mia did with hard work, smart positioning and a little help from some friends.

We've touched on the concept of personal branding, but let's make sure we are on the same page in how we define it. Think of personal branding as both what you create (your personal brand) and the act of creating it.

**A personal brand** is your image and reputation.

Whether you like it or not, you already have a personal brand. The world perceives you in a particular way and puts you in certain categories. From an external imaging standpoint, what you wear, your personality, and your gestures and presence guide how people perceive you. But, more importantly, your unique knowledge and experience (e.g., mobile technology licensing or change management) is the foundation of your brand value.

**Are you known for something of value, or are you a victim of others branding you?**

For instance, perhaps you need to reinvent your brand from:

- Doer to leader
- Inexperienced graduate to a professional with 21st-century skills
- Technology geek to technology business CEO

If your current brand will not get you to the next level of your career or the next business opportunity, you need to change your brand.

**Personal branding** is the act of developing the strategy and actions to guide your brand.

What should you be saying and doing to represent your brand the way you want?

**Without a brand goal, strategy and action plan, personal branding becomes akin to baking a cake without a recipe.**

You may hope for a three-tiered masterpiece but end up with an inedible concoction. With a good strategy and action plan, you can create a personal brand that makes the world want to hire, promote or fund you.

## Personal Branding Myths

Do you maintain beliefs that are hindering your ability to create a strong personal brand? You are not alone. Many people hold onto the following misguided beliefs:

1. **Doing great work = a great reputation**
2. **My boss will market my brand**
3. **Self-promotion is boastful and bad**

We need to dispel these myths so that you can start on your personal branding journey without being sabotaged by a brand-hindering belief system.

### Myth #1: Doing great work = a great reputation

You've been slaving away at your job. You have worked weekends, woken at the crack of dawn to finish the report your boss requested the night before, delivered on your objectives and your numbers—all without complaint. Surely, you will be recognized for your sacrifice and productivity.

At the department meeting on Monday morning, your boss will announce a new promotion. You start writing your acceptance speech and thinking of whom you will thank for helping you achieve this recognition. *But, what, say that again?* Kyle is the new director. How can that be? Kyle is a lightweight. He does not consistently make his numbers. He spends more time schmoozing than doing real work. *You've been robbed!*

I've heard so many variations on this theme—from professionals around the world. Why does my company take me for granted? How can I get the reputation and rewards that I deserve?

People are not mind readers. They have no way of knowing what great work you are doing unless you let them know. You have to market your contributions to be recognized for your value.

The next two myths are variations on the same theme.

## **Myth #2: My boss will market my brand**

John had had a stellar career in advertising. He followed his boss from company to company, where John was promoted and given more responsibilities and a larger salary with every move. When his boss retired, John's biggest cheerleader was gone. John lacked his own personal brand and network, and could not get the jobs that he wanted. John needed to be his own brand manager and not rely solely on his boss to brand him.

Certain cultures cultivate the image of the boss as a paternal figure who looks after your welfare. For this reason, many Asians in my seminars say that they think it is the job of their boss to market their value. Every individual needs to understand that in today's economy, you have to be responsible for your own destiny. The era of the paternalistic company or boss is over. Even Japanese companies, who historically never laid off workers, are adopting workforce reduction policies to stay flexible and competitive.

Know that your boss is busy. She has too much to do to prioritize promoting your brand. What if she leaves the company? All the equity you built with this one person will walk out the door when she leaves.

**Don't be a victim. Be your own brand manager.**

To be considered for a new job, a new opportunity or investor funding, you have to be known. Leaving the branding to others is losing control over your brand. Would you rather brand yourself or let your competitors brand you? The choice should be clear.

## **Myth # 3: Self-promotion is boastful and bad**

Most people do not like promoting themselves because of cultural barriers or a personal preference to stay in the background. If you were taught from a young age that you should be humble, then marketing your achievements seems to fly in the face of your cultural values.

At one of my personal branding seminars, an accomplished but quiet Chinese manager named Mary told me that all of her life she was taught humility and deference to your elders or boss were important values. For this reason, she never spoke up in meetings and never called attention to herself. I advised her to:

- Own a place at the table. Know and act like you belong there. Don't just take up space. You need to contribute your good ideas and show value.
- Share your work or achievements with your boss and group as a means of educating them about new ideas or best practices.

A few months later, Mary told me I had “changed her life.” The branding work helped her to position her unique value and to have the confidence to contribute at strategy meetings. The result was that her boss chose her to lead a key business team.

Self-promotion should not be an exercise in boasting, which can be off-putting. Education is a better concept. Brand education helps a target audience to recognize your value. In the case of Mary, communicating her strategic capabilities helped her to be considered for a leadership role that had eluded her in the past.

Promotion is often thought of as one-way communication from the sender to the receiver. We need to engage in two-way communication and value.

**When communication flows both ways, brands are more engaging and memorable.**

For instance, when you post interesting content and engage in online conversations with followers, the interaction lets you build your brand without being boastful.

If you still feel you can't educate the world on your brand for your own benefit, then do it for your organization. If you have a stronger and more valued brand, it will enhance your organization's brand. If no one knows about your unique value, the world loses out on your experience, expertise and opportunities to engage.

**Self-promotion, therefore, is really about educating the market about your value.**

Figure 1.1

## What Are the Benefits of Personal Branding?

When you are able to articulate your unique brand value, you will be rewarded in a number of ways.

**Respect.** Your name will have a certain cachet. Your reputation will grow.

**Ecosystem will advocate for you.** Influencers will make introductions or endorse you.

**Opportunities will arise,** such as jobs, clients, projects, partnerships, and speaking and media opportunities.

**Success.** You will land the job, climb the career ladder or get funding for your company.

**Enjoy work and life.** By living your desired brand, you will feel more fulfilled at work and in life.

In short, life is better with a great brand.

## Rebranding Throughout Life

We live in a world where constant change presents both opportunities and challenges for branding. Google and Facebook, two companies that have redefined our culture and the business world, did not exist before 1996 and 2004, respectively. However, today the Internet browser has become *the* platform for communications, sharing and services. I know of many professionals and entrepreneurs who were slow to rebrand for the opportunities afforded by this shift in technology and business model, and they suffered the consequences.



The world is dynamic. Your brand needs to change with the times. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, an average worker may have multiple careers and hold more than ten different jobs during his or her lifetime. Here are six key changes that may trigger a need to refresh your brand:

- New job search or career change
- Change in company ownership, leadership, your assignment or your boss
- Change in cultural values (customer-centric, one team, innovation, etc.)
- Shift in desired leadership traits (cross-functional, global, collaborative, flexible, etc.)
- Shift in technology or business strategy
- Reduction in workforce

Strategically managing your personal brand will help you to be proactive and in charge of your career. The BrandingPays™ System has concepts and tools to help you refresh your brand throughout your lifetime.

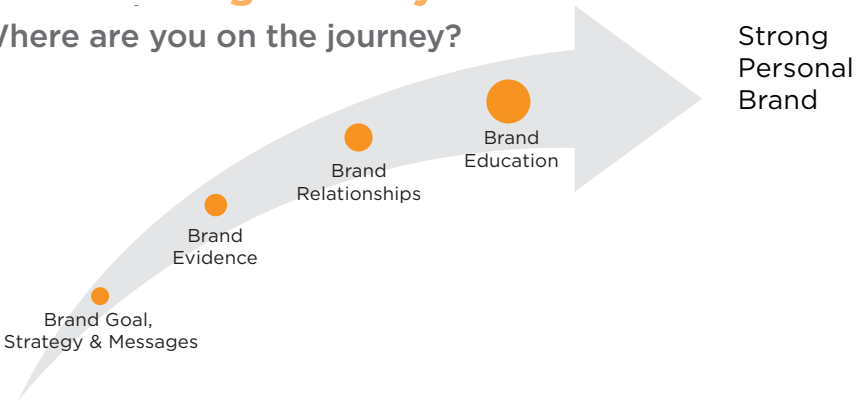
## Your Goal for Branding

The BrandingPays System works best when you have a goal. You won't know if you have succeeded in branding if you don't define what you are trying to achieve. The Branding Journey (Figure 1.2) is a way to look at the stages of personal branding that lead to a strong brand. Everyone wants his or her brand to be recognized and preferred. But starting at the end is putting the cart before the horse. You need to know where you are headed before you set branding in motion—otherwise, you may be going nowhere fast. The starting point in personal branding is having a goal and a strategy to achieve it. Your goal can be as simple as being recognized for your unique value in your current job. Or it may be landing a new job, changing careers or getting funding for your company. If you don't have a specific goal today, don't worry; the BrandingPays System can help you to identify new opportunities and potential goals.

Figure 1.2

## The Branding Journey

Where are you on the journey?



Look at this chart and determine where you are on the journey to a strong personal brand. Ask yourself the questions below.

<p><b>Goal, strategy and messages</b></p>	<p><i>Do I have a clear goal, strategy and messages to achieve the brand I want?</i></p> <p>You need to know where you want to go. Then, you have to develop the positioning, messaging, brand strategy and influencer understanding to get there.</p>
<p><b>Brand evidence</b></p>	<p><i>Do I have evidence of both the cake (rational value) and icing (emotional value) for a strong brand?</i></p> <p>Figure out what areas you will need to invest in to create your desired brand and deliver on your unique value. You need to be your brand.</p>
<p><b>Brand relationships</b></p>	<p><i>Do I have meaningful relationships with key influencers who affect my success?</i></p> <p>You need to develop relationships with key individuals who influence opinions both through social media and in person.</p>
<p><b>Brand education</b></p>	<p><i>Do I communicate my brand effectively and deliver on a consistent brand experience through my image, personality, messages and actions?</i></p> <p>If you have a brand that others like, value and endorse, you have a strong brand. Having a credible and visible brand will help you achieve your dreams faster—in both your life and career.</p>

If you've answered "no" to most of the questions, don't despair. Follow the steps in this book to accelerate your branding journey.

## Every Brand Needs Cake and Icing

We brand people every day in our minds and in what we say to others. *Raj is the go-to marketing expert. Helen is the brilliant strategist. Soo is the office social director. Carl is the company misanthrope.*

What are people saying about you?

If it's not what you want, you can change it. Branding is not just for brand gurus. You can be your own brand expert. You just have to “bake the cake, then ice it.”

You may wonder what a cake has to do with branding. The cake is just a metaphor to help us understand what branding is all about. Think of the iced cake as your brand.

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Figure 1.3

### Bake the Cake, then Ice It

**Cake** = Your rational value  
Functional benefits, expertise

**Icing** = Your emotional value  
Personality, image



#### CAKE + ICING = STRONG BRAND

- The **cake** foundation represents the *rational value* for your brand—your expertise, strengths, functional value and experience.
- The **icing** is your *emotional value*—your personality, your smile and your style. It's how people connect with you emotionally, such as your likability and whether they trust you.

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To be a strong brand, you need to have both cake and icing. You need to marry the rational with the emotional.

You've probably met people who appeared to be all icing and no cake. For instance, our first impression when seeing a beautiful supermodel might be that she is all icing. Then there are people who appear to be all cake and no icing, the stereotype for most engineers. You need to achieve a balance.

Let's look at a consumer brand example to help us better understand the role of cake and icing. Starbucks is a leading café and coffee brand. Starbucks' cake, or rational value, is providing a consistently good cup of coffee. The icing, or emotional value, is providing an inviting gathering place, friendly baristas, support for worthy causes and, for some, a brand that introduces us to new music. Starbucks has many competitors, but few have its rational and emotional brand power.

It's easy to see how consumer products are branded, but how does the branding of people work? Before we take a look at you, let's look at people who are more sophisticated in the care and feeding of their brands—that is, celebrities.

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When you look at this picture of actor George Clooney, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

“He’s a talented actor and director.”  
That’s cake.

“He’s a handsome and charming guy.”  
That’s icing.

“He’s a humanitarian activist.” That’s both cake (rational value as a humanitarian) and icing (emotional value as someone who cares).

We can go through quick associations for other celebrities like Kim Kardashian (cake=reality star and icing=beauty), Hillary Clinton (cake=Secretary of State and icing=personable and caring) and Bono (cake=rock singer and icing=humanitarian who cares).

What we associate with people can be both good and bad. You might say that you know of people who have reputations as being jerks, but they are still successful. I can think of a number of CEOs who demoralize employees by belittling them. These company leaders will ride high as long as they deliver bottom-line results.

But when they no longer produce the expected results, these CEOs, whose negative icing outweighs the positive cake, become vulnerable.

Let's leave the celebrity realm and move closer to your reality. What are the personal brands that you admire in your profession? What is the cake and what is the icing of those who are successful?

See Figure 1.4 for a chart of some personal brands for professionals. Try to articulate what you think your cake and icing are. You'll be able to compare this to your Brand Strategy Platform that we'll develop later in Chapter 6.

Figure 1.4

## Cake and Icing Examples

Examples	Cake (rational value)	Icing (emotional value)
Software Engineer	Open software leader	Sense of humor, geek chic style
Marketing Executive	Social Media Marketing expert	Charismatic, hip, positive attitude
Founder and CEO	Technology guru, Business vision	Inspirational, caring non-profit volunteer
YOU	?	?

Eileen, a product marketing director who consistently delivered great marketing programs, wanted to become a vice president at her company. Her boss recognized that her hard-charging approach produced results, but new management was changing the company culture to one that valued leaders with collaboration skills and emotional intelligence. Eileen lacked evidence of collaborative leadership skills (cake) and empathy (icing). She is now working on being recognized for new cake and icing that will move her closer to a leadership brand that the company will value.

**The better you understand your current brand, the easier it will be to develop a strategy to change it for the better.**

Perhaps your company does 360 assessments of what your boss, peers and reports think of your management capability, leadership style and performance. Take a look at these assessments and note common themes—both good and bad. The themes can help you to understand how others view you and inventory your assets and liabilities. These perceptions will provide valuable input to your thinking as you develop your positioning and brand strategy.

If you don't have 360 review data or want to supplement existing assessments, you can use the BrandingPays questions (see Figure 1.5) that are geared to provide input to the brand positioning process. These questions can be sent to those who know you well professionally. Go to [www.brandingpays.com/resources](http://www.brandingpays.com/resources) to download the personal brand assessment questions.

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Figure 1.5A

## **Personal Branding Assessment Questionnaire**

I'm working on a personal branding exercise and would value your candid input. Please answer the questions below as best you can. Short, bulleted answers are fine. I've included a sample list of Brand Attribute ideas to spark your thinking.

### **1. Core values**

- What do you think my core values are?

### **2. Key strengths and weaknesses**

- What is my key skill set?
- What is my expertise?
- What are the weaknesses that may hold me back?

### **3. Unique value proposition**

- What is my unique expertise or value that differentiates me?

### **4. Personality/image attributes**

- How do I come across to others?
- What are the key adjectives that describe my personality?
- Describe my look and style.

5. Leadership attributes

- What kind of a leader am I?

6. Relationship attributes

- What is it like to engage with me—professionally and socially?

7. What is a living or inanimate thing that best represents my brand?

Please explain. Examples:

- A trusted Saint Bernard dog who always come to the rescue
- A Mini Cooper car that is efficient, fun to drive and has a quirky sense of style

The following list of potential brand attributes may help to spur ideas as you answer the questions above.

Figure 1.5B

Sample Brand Attributes

Core Values	Strengths	Personality	Image
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Passion</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Reliability</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Honesty</li> <li>• Giving back</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Thought leadership</li> <li>• Service</li> <li>• Helping others</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Competence</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Open mind</li> <li>• Friendship</li> <li>• Determination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project management</li> <li>• People management</li> <li>• Financial or operations management</li> <li>• Technical expertise</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Managing conflict</li> <li>• Creative problem solving</li> <li>• Delivering presentations</li> <li>• Decision making</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Strategic vision</li> <li>• Collaboration &amp; teamwork</li> <li>• Building and leading teams</li> <li>• Leading innovation</li> <li>• Global strategies</li> <li>• Streamlining processes</li> <li>• Domain expertise</li> <li>• Driving for results</li> <li>• Change management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visionary</li> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Strategic</li> <li>• Creative</li> <li>• Present</li> <li>• Focused</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Inspirational</li> <li>• Sense of humor</li> <li>• Compassionate</li> <li>• Patient</li> <li>• Results-oriented</li> <li>• Analytical</li> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Competent</li> <li>• Expert</li> <li>• Unflappable</li> <li>• Driven</li> <li>• Passionate</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Personable</li> <li>• Energetic</li> <li>• Friendly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophisticated</li> <li>• Elegant</li> <li>• Edgy</li> <li>• Buttoned-down</li> <li>• Classic</li> <li>• Business casual</li> <li>• Fashion forward</li> <li>• Urban</li> <li>• Artistic</li> <li>• Establishment</li> <li>• Couture</li> <li>• Technology savvy</li> <li>• Worldly</li> <li>• Cultured</li> <li>• Hip</li> <li>• Colorful</li> <li>• Conservative</li> <li>• Academic</li> <li>• Professional</li> <li>• Geek chic</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial</li> <li>• Leader</li> <li>• (see Personality list)</li> </ul>

To access PDF version, go to [www.brandingpays.com/resources](http://www.brandingpays.com/resources)

Are there any themes that have emerged from the answers you've received? For instance, have people described you as “adaptable,” “flexible” and “agile”? If so, the consistent theme is the ability to adapt to changes, which is a highly desirable trait in business. You will want to include this in your branding as you move through the chapters of this book.

## The BrandingPays System

### Five Steps to Your Cake and Icing

Now that you better understand yourself and how others think of you, how do you shape your brand? The BrandingPays™ System (Figure 1.6) includes all the steps you need to take to figure out your cake and icing and communicate it to the world.

Figure 1.6

### The BrandingPays Five-Step System



- **Step 1: Positioning** (Chapter 2). Define your unique cake, or rational value.
- **Step 2: Messages** (Chapter 3). Develop the key messages that support your cake.
- **Step 3: Brand Strategy** (Chapter 4). Put your cake and icing together in the Brand Strategy Platform. You will brand from the inside out for an authentic, 360-degree brand.
- **Step 4: Ecosystem** (Chapter 5). Define the influencer model for your brand ecosystem, and develop a strategy for relationship building and management. (Think of this as a distribution and reference model for your cake and icing.)
- **Step 5: Action Plan** (Chapter 6). Develop an action plan that includes 1) brand improvement for both your cake and icing and 2) brand communication so your brand can be known and recognized.



You might think, “I don’t have time to do a strategy. I just want to do something now.” Most of us want to start with tactics. Implementing something feels like we’re taking action. It’s the reason why millions of professionals are flocking to social media—often without a clue as to why.

**Posting on social media or going to more networking events without a clear strategy is an example of “hurry up and wait.”**

You’ll get out there faster, but if the world isn’t clear on what value your brand delivers, then the confusion you create will only serve to slow adoption of your brand.

Therefore, starting with tactics is like icing your cake before you bake it. The icing will not stand on its own without a cake foundation. You need to know what you want to be known for. You need to have a branding goal and strategy. Few of us, however, understand how to do this. This book will give you the framework and tools to create a strong brand that helps you achieve your goals.

*BrandingPays* is about taking charge of your personal brand and not leaving it up to chance. You don’t have to be a victim of your circumstances or how others have branded you in the past. In writing this book, I hope to inspire you and empower you to take action to better your brand.