

The power of being yourself

Why now's the perfect time to build your personal brand

Think branding is all about business? Think again. Personal branding is a proven process that helps people live successful lives, whatever their definition of success might be. But what is a personal brand? How can you build yours? And how can it help you prepare for life after lockdown? For the answers, we spoke to award-winning brand consultant and trainer, Kubi Springer...

Kubi Springer's client list reads like a who's who of A-list businesses and celebrities. Nike, Blackberry, Rolls Royce, P Diddy, Justin Timberlake... all these clients and more have benefited from Kubi's branding expertise. But first, the basics. What is a personal brand, exactly?

"A personal brand is the emotional connection you build with your target audience," says Kubi. "It's the personification of your audience's total experience when they connect with you."

So that's what personal branding is. But Kubi is also keen to stress what it isn't: "Some think it's about selling your services at meetings or on LinkedIn. Personal branding is about connecting with your tribe and allowing them to experience the authentic you. Rather than networking to sell, personal branding involves making new contacts and friends. If people like you, they're more likely to want to work with you."

A big part of connecting with your tribe is conveying the work you do and the results you get – but not through hard-sell tactics. "One of my favorite sayings is, 'It's who you know that gets you through the door, and what you know that keeps you there.' Personal branding enables you to connect with your audience and offer them something they value. Branding is the pull. Marketing is the push. Pulling and pushing the wrong way round can confuse your tribe."

Late last year, Kubi's first book – I Am My Brand – hit the shelves to great acclaim. It's subtitle – How to build your brand without apology – speaks volumes about some people's reticence to focus on their personal brand.

"As youngsters, we're not taught to show up in school as our true authentic selves," says Kubi. "And as human

beings, we all suffer from insecurities. The idea of being unapologetic comes from knowing that what makes us unique makes us strong. Innovation comes from diversity, and different people playing to their different strengths. If you've made it to an interview, the business already knows you can do the job. Now they want to know who you are."

Looking back, Kubi recognizes the point she was destined to become a personal branding expert. Aged 11, Kubi was a burgeoning talent in classical ballet. But all that changed when the academy called her parents for a meeting. "They told my parents a career in ballet wasn't likely, simply because I'm black," she says.

From that moment, Kubi was on a mission to step into the spotlight: "Because someone said I couldn't, I was determined I would. It gave me the fire to work hard and prove myself. And it inspired me to help others discover how they can be themselves and still be amazing."

In today's 'new normal' world, many are finding themselves reflecting on their pasts and possible futures. Kubi believes it's a great time for people to start branding themselves.

"I recommend writing down the journey of your life from year zero to now. It will show you the trends, patterns and passions in your life and, ultimately, who you really are. Then you can start defining which of your strengths you want to bring to the table. We're living in tough times. The relationships you build with personal branding will pull you through."

That's Kubi Springer. A woman who knows how to turn life's challenges into positives – and living proof that you can't keep a good brand down.

Kubi's key takeaways

Here are Kubi's eight pillars to building a successful personal brand...

1. Vision. Your vision is the future you see when your eyes are closed. Define your vision and continually revisit it. Jobs for life have gone. Careers zigzag unexpectedly. So check your vision regularly and ask yourself – what do I want to achieve?

2. Decision. What tough decisions do you need to make to realize your vision? Maybe you need to move to an area that offers more work opportunities. Or you might decide to work from home because your lifestyle requires it.

3. Clarity. Take stock of what your personal brand looks like. How do people perceive you? Do you see yourself in the same way? This will help clarify what your brand represents – and how to communicate it.

4. Strategy. This is very different from tactics. It's 'what' needs to be done and 'why'. Ask yourself why you need to do certain things to achieve your vision. How might a blog help you? What's your reason for attending a networking event? Know why you're doing something before jumping straight in.

5. Tactics. Many start doing tactical things before defining their strategy, such as putting up web pages, posting on Instagram, writing blogs, and hosting webinars. But this is like stabbing in the dark and could lead to zero results. Do the groundwork first, and you'll know you've chosen the right tactics.

6. Metrics. Measuring results isn't just for business. It's vital for discovering the success of your personal branding. For example, how many people engaged with your social media campaign? What new contacts did you gain at the networking event? Data will help drive your decisions. To keep track, it's worth investing in a personal CRM (customer relationship management) solution.

7. Ownership. Know your true worth and value. You'll then feel more confident about getting what you want. It's ok to negotiate a better deal. It's ok to ask for a promotion. You deserve it because you're brilliant at what you do.

8. Unapologetic. There will be times life kicks you and you feel no one understands your brand. What sets you apart is how you show up in the tough times. It's one thing to say you're strong and resourceful. It's another to demonstrate it. This realization came from my own pain, when my husband asked for a divorce while I was writing I Am My Brand. The experience forced me to rediscover who I truly am.

What do you think?

How might personal branding benefit you? Are you already on your own personal branding journey? If so, how has it worked for you? We'd love to [hear](#) your thoughts!

Listen to the podcast [here](#)

Connect with Kubi

Want to know more about Kubi's personal branding work and results? Visit her website at www.shebuildsbrands.com

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