



Why you need to brand yourself in today's competitive marketplace — especially if you're an immigrant!

By Lisa Evans

In today's competitive marketplace, no longer is a simple resumé enough to land you a job. Creating a personal brand is the new way to stand out amongst the competition. While most of us are familiar with the concept of product brands — Nike telling us to “just do it” and Folgers Coffee claiming it’s “the best part of waking up” — we're less familiar with the idea of branding ourselves.

Branding is “a way for the individual to differentiate themselves from the rest of the pack,” says human resources consultant Aline Ayoub, founder of Aline Ayoub HR Consulting in Toronto. In addition to helping companies select the right people for their organizations, Ayoub, originally from Egypt, is also an advocate helping internationally trained professionals succeed in the Canadian workplace.

In her publication, *10 Essential Steps to Former Executive Immigrants Getting Their Dream Job*, developing a personal brand is one of those essential steps. She says, “Developing a personal brand is branding ‘you.’ It helps define who you are and the type of work you do ... It's your personality, your voice, your interests, everything about you that you want people to know.”

Seven steps to create your brand

1. Know who you are. Make a list of your strengths, interests and values. “Be unique. You cannot build your personal brand while pretending you are someone else. To create a strong personal brand, you want to find yourself. Discover your strengths. Build on your expertise. Remember you are the brand,” according to Ayoub.

Ayoub adds that developing your personal brand in Canada doesn't mean you're reinventing yourself. “Whoever you were in your home country, the successes that you achieved remain the same successes in your new country,” she says.

Of course, many newcomers face a fear of rejection in their new country, which can stand in the way of developing an

authentic personal brand. But just the act of identifying your strengths, interests and values in order to define your personal brand can help you increase your confidence and overcome your insecurities.



Fatima Omar Khamissa not only built up her personal brand as a life coach and a women's advocate, she wrote a book on how to create a brand on little or no budget!

2. Create your branding statement.

Once you've identified your strengths, interests and values, you need to communicate those to the world by putting together your branding statement. Diana YK Chan, personal branding and career expert, and founder of Mag-

nify Your Marketability in Toronto, likes to call this your "sound bite."

Hong Kong-born Chan defines herself as an "authentic leader and relationship connector with a keen eye for identifying, recruiting and developing top talent." This branding statement appears on her resumé, her website, her business card and LinkedIn profile.

She likens building a branding statement to coming up with a theme for a wedding. "Everything from the design of the wedding invitation to the flowers and the wedding décor ties back to the theme that represents the couple," says Chan. Just like a wedding theme, your branding statement — or sound bite — should carry through everything you do, including your resumé, website and social media profile.

3. Be passionate about what you put out in the world. Fatima Omar Khamissa, life coach, entrepreneur, publisher of Spiritual

Biz Moms website and author of numerous books including *How I Branded Myself Without a Budget*, is all about passion. "Speak from your heart and be passionate about the things that drive you," says Khamissa who came to Canada from South Africa and shares her story about surviving domestic abuse. "People know when we're being fake and inauthentic. When we are authentic and really passionate about your subject, people want more."

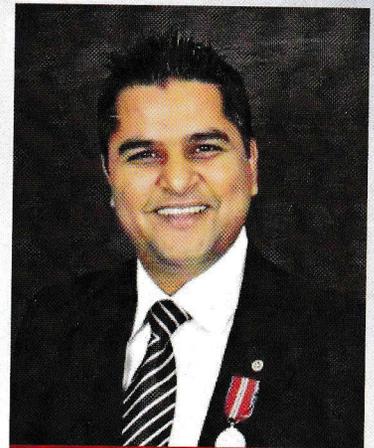
4. Be knowledgeable, too. In addition to passion, you have to back up your opinions with intelligence. Czech/Indian, Cairo-born immigrant Gautam Nath, vice-president of Balmoral Multicultural Marketing and a branding expert, advises to have a strategy. "Branding is about being sure you know what you want to stand for and doing things in support of that," says Nath. Whether online or in person, "make sure you participate in discussions and do so intelligently," he says.

5. Choose and use social media effectively. Social media today is everywhere and is an extremely effective and immediate way of building and promoting your brand with others.

Start by choosing appropriate social media channels. With such a wide variety of social media networks — from Twitter and LinkedIn to Google+, Pinterest to Facebook and Instagram — it can be hard to know where to start. Choose a maximum of three outlets to begin so you can ensure you'll be able to keep up with posting frequent content. "Pick three social media networks that you want to work on. Don't make an account in every single thing out there because you're not going to be able to give that audience the content, the love and the nurturing that's required," says Khamissa.

To decide which outlets to focus on, look at what others in your industry are using. That's likely where you'll get the most return on your investment of time and effort, and where you'll be able to connect with others in your field.

You also have to find your focus. Pick a topic area you want to dominate and tailor your messaging and social media postings. If you're in the HR field, for example, you'll want to follow other HR consultants and business publications to keep abreast of current hiring practices. Share articles about the topic and re-tweet other HR consultants' postings so it becomes clear to anyone who follows you



Pakistan-born Tim Iqbal has been in Canada for less than 10 years, but is striving to become a well-known mover and shaker, seeking the Conservative nomination to run as an MP for Mississauga Centre in the next federal election.

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what your area of focus is.

And be consistent and strategic in how and when you use social media. "You cannot be on social media sporadically," says Ayoub. Create a strategy using a calendar to remind you of when and what to post, or use a social media management tool such as Hootsuite to manage your online activity. "Being on social media is not just tweeting once in a while, it's tweeting every day, it's having a strategy to make sure people see you on a regular basis so they can recognize you [as an expert in the field]," says Ayoub.

6. Get out there and make connections in person! Don't just limit yourself to social media, even though it can be the easier route for newcomers who feel shy about putting themselves out there in person. Nath suggests immigrants go out and volunteer to get their name out there. "Volunteer for something that you have a passion for and for something where you can showcase your skillset and build a portfolio of Canadian initiatives. That is an important first step in building your personal brand."

Pakistan-born Tim Iqbal, IT and business intelligence professional who is currently seeking a Conservative Party nomination to represent Mississauga Centre in the next federal election, agrees. "I've developed my brand through a variety of avenues. I attribute some of my success to constantly volunteering and networking. Volunteering helps to build your network in addition to helping people and strengthening your commitment to your community," he says.

The flip side of helping your community is to find assistance mentor. Finding a business or in-ensuring you have pertinent to the adds Iqbal.

Forging connections on many levels is definitely key to Scherbina, founder at Diversity Inc. The migrant after networking and

helping your community is yourself, in the form of a mentor from your chosen industry will be helpful in the knowledge that is Canadian economy,"

connections on many levels creating a brand, says Olga and senior consultant Clues Consulting Ukrainian-born im-became a sought-expert on immigration in British Columbia after spending several years diligently networking and



Hong Kong-born Diana YK Chan is personal branding and career expert who helps clients "magnify their marketability."

becoming known as a strong voice on the topic.

She advises: "Identify key players in your field including well-known experts, top consultants and academics, and make it your goal to meet with as many as possible. The majority of my contracts I got because people saw my previous work, but also because I was proactive and met with my potential clients long before they needed me."

7. Carry your brand across online to in-person communications. Who you are online and who you are in person should be the same. Chan, for example, dresses in the same types of bold colours that she uses on her website and business card when attending networking events. She also makes a point to speak about her area of interest when meeting others so it becomes clear to everyone she meets what she's about.

It's about being memorable, according to Chan, which can translate to more income-earning potential and professional success. "Celebrities like Justin Bieber, Martha Stuart and Katy Perry have a very strong brand, which means they get the most attention," she says. While you may not aspire to celebrity status, developing a personal brand that resonates with Canadian employers and clients can be the key to success in launching a long-lasting career in your new country. 🌟



Ukrainian-born Olga Scherbina developed a name for herself in the arena of immigrant integration after years of diligent networking.



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