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**BE *Your Own Brand***  
A Breakthrough Formula *for Standing Out from the Crowd*  
By  
David McNally and Karl D. Speak

From their perspectives as consultants to well-know companies, McNally and Speak take business principles of brand management and translate them into simple guidelines for creating your own personal brand—the perception that others have of their relationship with you.

Relationship is the key word in defining either a business brand or a personal brand. In both cases the brand recognition is an iterative process with an emotional component that describes the total experience of the relationship. Perception is another key word because perception is reality. It is what other people think that matters.

The word “brand” does not mean the logo or marketing slogan or the result from an ad campaign. Rather, it is the repeated experience with a product that develops an emotional connection.

Both business and personal brands are (1) distinctive, (2) relevant, and (3) consistent. Your values, beliefs, commitments, etc. are distinctive. It is not a veneer, but “results from understanding the needs of others, wanting to meet these needs, and being able to do so while staying true to your values.” Relevance is a process that starts by asking what others need, value, or expect. Consistency “is a hallmark of strong brands.” Each experience reinforces the brand and trust grows or diminishes.

Personal brand dimensions including our (1) roles, (2) standards, (3) style, “show you what you look like to someone else.” Our roles are our relationships with others. For example, you can be a consultant, a co-worker, a mother, and a friend. Examples of standards are non-judgmental listener, proficient net-worker, open-minded, or unfocused, situational values, undisciplined. They can be positive or negative, depending on the perceptions of the other person. Those perceptions are built on your actions, not intentions. Style is “your brand’s personality.” Style (e.g., outgoing, caring, warm or arrogant, bossy, uptight) is the most difficult dimension to measure. Again, it is in the eye of the beholder.

McNally and Speak maintain that “a successful brand is an accurate, genuine, representation of the substance at the core of the originator, be it a business or an individual? This requires authenticity, which is sometimes difficult in a world that seems to revere winning at all costs. They ask three important

questions to “guide you on the road to authenticity.” 1<sup>st</sup>—“What is My Life About?” Are you concerned with your agenda or genuinely interested in other people? 2<sup>nd</sup>—“What do I want to Create?” They contend that decisions are frequently made too narrowly and life is richer when moving toward a goal. 3<sup>rd</sup>—“What Do I Hold to be True?” To help answer this question, they have developed a Brand Values Profile. See Appendix I. After completing this profile they ask you to determine your top seven values.

With your seven top values, you plot your own Personal Brand Manifesto. First, you note the different relationships you have, your standards, and key values and your style. Then you pick the dominant brand value—either standard or style—for your brand platform. From here you develop your brand promise—something that can be applied across a broad spectrum of relationships. See Appendix II for blank form and several examples. Going through this exercise forces you to clarify your values.

The next step is to develop systematic ways to make distinctive, relevant, and consistent connections with people, delivering something valued by those people. Constant feedback will help redefine strategies. Apparently a common business rule is that “seven things must go right to make up for one thing that goes wrong.” Our goal is to build enough “brand equity” and create a level of loyalty “that can withstand the worst of times.” You must constantly look for gaps in expectations and experiences and use complaints as a “valuable opportunity to retarget efforts.”

Building your brand takes time, patience and focus. You will be severely challenged at times. To prepare for those challenges, they suggest completing a Personal Brand Manifesto, getting feedback, redefining your promise as you grow, and “making sure your package reflects your contents.” You want your outward appearance, words, tone of voice, etc. to represent an accurate picture of the inner you.

There was quite a bit of redundancy in the 127 pages of this book, but the central message is a vital one for success. I have found that the time I have spent on building my Personal Brand Manifesto has been helpful in finding gaps in expectations and experiences and making me more sensitive to the needs of those around me. Coaches will be particularly interested in the process that the authors have created.

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