



Chapter 1

You, Inc.

Create your own style . . . let it be unique for yourself and yet identifiable for others.

—Orson Welles

When the idea [for Newman's Own] came up, I said, "Are you crazy? Stick my face on the label of salad dressing?" And then, of course, we got the whole idea of exploitation and how circular it is. Why not, really, go to the fullest length, and the silliest length, in exploiting yourself and turn the proceeds back to the community?

—Paul Newman

I've never lived in a building without my name on it.

—Ivanka Trump

I've always thought that a name says a lot about a person. So naturally, being named Howard, I always wanted to crawl into a hole.

—Howard Stern

I am irresistible, I say, as I put on my designer fragrance. I am a merchant banker, I say, as I climb out of my BMW. I am a juvenile

lout, I say, as I pour an extra strong lager. I am handsome, I say, as I put on my Levi jeans.

—John Kay

Why You as a Brand?

Why not? You are *you*. You are unique—there isn't another person on this planet exactly like *you*. There is nobody quite like *you*. It doesn't matter whether you are a celebrity or not. You too can have a brand.

This is a time when “individualism” is being celebrated. Companies that offer cars, jeans, colas, newspapers, real estate, financial advice, and a host of other products and services are keen to target *you*, being fully aware that you are even keener to dodge them. In fact, car companies are running open design contests. And you are invited to post opinions in news blogs now. Before, news was fed to you. Now you can be a news reporter yourself by recording news on a video camera and posting it on YouTube or CNN's iReporter. Your tastes matter, and so do your opinions. Even your ramblings about your current state of mind, or politics, or how your cat drinks milk are of interest to people. You have attained so much prominence that *TIME* magazine named “You” as the person of the year for 2006. Time Inc. printed 6,965,000 copies of the magazine with reflective Mylar on the covers. The idea was that when people looked at the cover to see who the “person of the year” was, they saw their own reflections. So with so much emphasis on you, it makes sense to have a brand built around you. And good branding starts with *you*.

Building a brand around your skills, expertise, and personal traits is known as personal branding and is perhaps the safest bet in marketing. You are not standing and vouching for anyone else but yourself. When you back others' brands, you do not have much control over the consequences. By contrast, if you back yourself, you have more control over your business and personal affairs. Who else can market yourself better than *you*?

“We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You,” wrote management guru and author Tom Peters in his magazine, *The Fast Company*. And personal branding was

officially born. Personal branding is all about taking your unique strengths, skill sets, and personality traits and packaging them into a solid brand.

Are you an entrepreneur, aspiring actor, motivational speaker, writer, stand-up comedian, model, artist, singer, designer, decorator, politician, or minister? Then you need to have a brand. Dentists, athletes, accountants, attorneys, computer professionals, photographers, fitness trainers, manicurists, architects, gym owners, chefs, waiters, magicians, musicians, engineers, business consultants—all have brands. Even if you are none of these and work in an organization, you still need a brand.

You Are Special

Let's not be too sentimental here, but everybody is special. The Creator gifts everybody with some unique personality traits. You must have something that sets you apart from the rest; it cannot be otherwise. You need a brand to highlight that specialty.

Do you have a distinctive trademark about the way you do your job and serve your clients? Do you deliver on projects ahead of time or on time, are your dealings polite and pleasing, is your product good, or is the cost of your service affordable? Do you anticipate problems for your clients and give them solutions up front, do you solve your customers' service-related worries, or do you offer creative ideas? If you have more than one special quality, your brand can be built on one core quality and others can be added on.

This is an age of individuals. Even young children have their own brands. The Internet is full of blogs and Web sites of kids expressing who they are. Here are some excerpts.

"I guess violent video games make you more aggressive. So I stay away from games that contain too much violence."

"I am a cool, confident person."

"I like Hercules because he was a hero. Hercules is the strongest God."

These statements by youngsters in their blogs indicate a sense of self that is already being established and publicly expressed.

Youngsters also showcase their talents such as painting, singing,

and songwriting on the Internet. Julian is a young singer who has his own MySpace blog. By the age of eleven, he had some laudable performances to his credit. The blog helped him get noticed and invited to perform live.

Akiana is a child artist and poet who has her own Web site. A child prodigy, she has been featured on “Oprah.”

But kids need not be prodigies to have their own brand. Almost every kid who’s Web savvy tries to build his brand by creating a site or blog. The Internet provides the easiest and cheapest way to build brand, so kids are using it. That’s remarkable, but more than that, the fact that such young people are going ahead to define themselves so openly is a reflection of the times we are living in.

If a child can have a brand at such a tender age, what stops you the businessman, artist, singer, athlete, or motivational speaker from having one? If kids can create their brand simply to have an identity, why can’t you do the same?

Of course, millions of adults are expressing and defining themselves in myriad ways. The era of shyness is gone. People are tooting their own horns joyously. Some do it subtly, others rather loudly. Some are adroit in this art, while others do it badly. The skillful ones win. You too have to toot your own horn. If you don’t do it for yourself, nobody will do it for you.

You Have You

Who is the most important person in your life? You are. It’s you who takes care of yourself and decides what to eat, what to wear, where to work, where to go for fun and recreation, and for whom to vote. You are in charge of your job, health, happiness, and life. Others are in your life because you have wished them to be in your life. Certainly your friends and family are important in your life, but you are the most important one. It’s you who makes the first declaration of your talents, skills, aspirations, and goals.

And the Creator has endowed you with many abilities. Maybe you have a knack for making people laugh while you speak. Maybe you are a good singer. Maybe you excel at selling, or your customer service is impeccable. Or maybe you are a great listener. Do you

make friends easily? Or are you good at telling jokes? Or are you the contemplative type? Even that helps. You have something that is unique to you and you alone. This cannot be otherwise. That is the Creator's way of gifting everybody with at least one good attribute. If you have come this far reading this book, you must have that special quality.

Your capabilities and talents get reflected in your job or business. Your business and profits all trace their origin to you—your attitude and your capabilities. Have confidence in yourself. You have unlimited potential, little of which you have already realized. You have your mind and body under your control. You have the talent and expertise in your area of business.

Make an honest assessment of yourself. Start by taking away the negatives and concentrating on your positive traits. Make a list of things that are unique to you and your business. Capitalize on the positives. Then you can look at the negatives to improve upon. Don't be harsh here, just realistic. Many people assume that being cynical is being real. No. You are considerate to others, so here you need to be considerate to yourself.

Chances are that your product is great. If your product is just average, maybe your customer service is remarkably pleasing. Your packaging may be attractive. Or is it your after-sales service that's unbeatable? You will soon find that something or other about you and your business is good. That single factor may differentiate you from the rest.

Let's take an example to illustrate the point. Say you are in the business of selling pizzas in your neighborhood and nearby. Let's assume your pizzas are tasty. But so are the pizzas of two other pizzerias in your locality. Your pricing is as competitive as theirs. You also have a home-delivery service, like them. But you have made it a point always to deliver the pizzas to the customer's doorstep with a smile and a few words of genuine pleasantries. You simply do not hire delivery boys who have frowns on their faces. You only employ people who greet the customers with a sincere smile while delivering the pizzas. You instruct them again and again that this is a must and that the inability to serve customers cheerfully will lead to their losing their jobs. You even call customers after each delivery to find out whether the pizza was delivered cheerfully.

And you yourself are of a cheerful disposition. Since your childhood, your parents drilled it into you that you need to do everything with zeal in your heart and a smile on your face. That has become your trademark, and you want the same atmosphere in your business.

Soon you will see that the number of customers loyal to you is increasing while your competitors are scratching their heads about your booming sales. After the product passes muster, everybody loves to do business with friendly and cheerful people. The cheerful delivery is your USP (Unique Selling Proposition or Unique Selling Point). This is your brand.

Observe here that it's *you* who has come into focus. Remember that whether you are a painter, speaker, actor, singer, businessman, or writer—whatever you are—your work is always an extension of yourself. Your work always reflects who you are. If you are friendly, your business will be peopled with a staff that is friendly towards each other as well as towards the customer.

If you have a lot of patience, that will be reflected in your work culture and on your shop floor. Your staff will be inspired to have patience too. Your customer service will be top-notch, because your employees will not show a hint of impatience while attending to customer complaints. Patience will become your brand.

Let's say you have the gift of speaking about motivation in a humorous way, making listeners fall off their seats with laughter. Your e-mail inbox will be full of invitations to speak at meetings. As a motivational speaker, you can make laughter your brand. Additionally, if you have survived a crisis and relate to the audience your triumph over adversity, you will be hailed as a survivor. People will hold you in high esteem and will not take you as a mere humorous speaker but someone who knows what life is really all about. Your personal brand is then being a person who has not just survived a tragedy but also has a humorous and positive perspective about life and living.

If excellence is your *raison d'être*, then in all probability you will spend most of your working hours improving the quality of your product until it leaves the competitors ages behind. Then your peerless product automatically qualifies as the brand here. Customers and your employees know that your product is not a mediocre one. It bears the stamp of highest quality.

Customers will develop a brand loyalty for your product with little persuasion.

So it's obvious: your brand is an expression of your qualities, skills, and work culture. There is always a person behind the brand. Why don't you find out what's going to be your brand? Why not innovate some more and improve on it, highlight it, and promote it, so that when the competition gets hot you still retain your loyal customers?

Put Your Name on It

The sweetest music to a person's ears is his or her name. Henry Ford, Donald Trump, Michael Dell, Michael Bloomberg, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, Bill and Melinda Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Gianni Versace, Ralph Lauren, and many others have put their names on their organizations. You can too. But the big question is: are you willing to stake your reputation on and stand behind your product? You should if you are honest, passionate, and sincere about your business.

A Personal Brand Is Safer

When you back up someone else's brand, you vouch for his actions and reputation. This creates a very uncertain situation, because others' actions are not directly under your control. It is safer to stand for your own actions and reputation than to back up others' brands. Risk is minimized. When you have a personal brand, you take responsibility for your actions and become accountable. You gain more control. You know where something went wrong and can set about fixing it.

Personal Branding Is Not All about You; It's about Your Customers Too

When all is said and done, personal branding is not all about you. Surprised? You won't be if you read on. Branding is about

your customers too. This may sound contradictory, but a little reflection would make it clear that your business and brand exist because of your customers. It's for others that you talk, act, paint, write, play, and sculpt, as much as it is for yourself.

Who is going to consume your products and services? Not you, but others. Your brand should reflect you, genuinely. It should be based on your strengths, skills, and vision. But isn't all this for the customers, for the consumers?

The target is always the consumer. So the You, Inc. brand should always be considered from their perspective. Great branding starts with you, but it ends with the customer. That's what top brands have learned.

Quiz

Would you like to test how brand aware you are? Can you correctly attribute a slogan to the particular brand to which it belongs? Let's find out.

Remember, a low score is *not* going to determine in any way how much you can learn from this book. Similarly, a high score *doesn't* imply that you will learn the tactics of building a brand effortlessly. The test is just for fun, and the score has no impact on how you assimilate the ideas and guides offered in the forthcoming chapters. A high or low score is just that. So have fun.

Read the questions carefully and answer them. You can find the correct answers at the end of the test to check your score.

1. The current slogan of the famous company GE (General Electric) is:
 - A. "We bring good things to life."
 - B. "Imagination at work."
 - C. "Nothing works better."
 - D. "We are everywhere."
2. "Connecting People" is the famous tagline of a cell-phone corporation. Can you find the connection from the given choices?
 - A. Motorola

- B. Samsung
- C. Nokia
- D. LG
- E. None of the above

3. With which computer company would you associate the tag “Your potential. Our passion”?

- A. IBM
- B. Microsoft
- C. Intel
- D. LG
- E. None of the above

4. “The Power of Dreams” is the slogan of which of the following car companies?

- A. Toyota
- B. Honda
- C. Ford
- D. General Motors

5. Can you name the credit-card company that admits, “There are some things money can’t buy”?

- A. MasterCard
- B. Visa
- C. American Express
- D. Discover
- E. None of the above

6. The famous movie-production house MGM has a roaring lion in its trademark. What does MGM stand for?

- A. Metro Godwin Mayer
- B. Metro Goldwin Metro
- C. Metro Godwin Metro
- D. Metro Goldwyn Mayer
- E. None of the above

7. Nike needs no introduction. The company takes its name from the:

- A. Greek god of endurance

- B. Greek god of power
 - C. Greek goddess of victory
 - D. Greek goddess of sports
8. Which personality owns a production house named from an anagram of the person's own name?
- A. David Letterman
 - B. Oprah Winfrey
 - C. Jay Leno
 - D. Phil Donahue
9. This person's stylized signature became his brand and logo:
- A. McDonald's
 - B. Michael Jordan
 - C. Walt Disney
 - D. Charles Schultz
10. You may find "Donald Trump Signature Collection" on the following items:
- A. Vodka
 - B. Books
 - C. Home furnishing
 - D. All of the above
 - E. Only A and C
11. The red socks logo used by the Boston Red Sox was created in the:
- A. Late 1800s
 - B. Early 1900s
 - C. Mid-1900s
 - D. Late 1900s
12. Which cosmetics brand is Serena Williams, the ace tennis star, promoting?
- A. Decelor
 - B. Fresh
 - C. Lancôme
 - D. Clarins
 - E. Flirt

13. Basketball superstar Dwayne Wade has his own line of shoes for this shoemaker:

- A. Florsheim
- B. Adidas
- C. Puma
- D. Converse

14. This NBA player had the best-selling jersey in 2007:

- A. Dwayne Wade
- B. Kobe Bryant
- C. Allen Iverson
- D. Tim Duncan

15. Roger Federer is the brand ambassador for this popular watchmaker:

- A. Bulgari
- B. Cartier
- C. Patek Philippe
- D. Rolex
- E. Corum

Answers

1. B—"Imagination at work" is the current slogan of GE. This has replaced, "We bring good things to life."

2. C—Nokia.

3. B—Microsoft.

4. B—Honda.

5. A—MasterCard. The complete slogan is: "There are some things money can't buy. For everything else, there is MasterCard."

6. D—Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

7. C—Greek goddess of victory.

8. B—Oprah owns "Harpo" productions.

9. C—Walt Disney.

10. D—All the above. Donald Trump also has his own Signature Collection of bottled water, clothing for men, steaks, etc.

11. B—Early 1900s (1908, to be exact).

12. E—Flirt.

- 13. D—Converse. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Nike.
- 14. B—Kobe Bryant.
- 15. D—Rolex.