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Donatella Rampado



FrancoAngeli

SELFBRAND THE EVOLUTION

Turn yourself into
an authentic brand!

Trend

Progetto grafico di copertina di Elena Pellegrini

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Introduction

I published a book titled *The SelfBrand: Turn Yourself into an Authentic Brand* in 2008. The concept was to respectfully apply marketing concepts, even at the cost of overturning certain laws of statistics. This was an innovative idea in the context of Italian cultural practice. However, considerable change has occurred since that time, and now it's necessary to redesign, innovate and add experience to what was previously achieved. The first edition of the book sold nine thousand copies, but with continued experience there are new lessons to impart.

The focus, in this new book, is on the importance of a correct perspective of brand as it applies to the individual in order to continue one's growth. This new edition presents the process of creating one's own brand in three fundamental phases: **startup** (for those who need to create a successful SelfBrand), **growth and maintenance** (for those who already have a SelfBrand, but it must be increased and extended) and the **power SelfBrand**, for those who have reached success, status and influence but still need to defend and maintain the SelfBrand while warding off targeted attacks.

The content of this book represents a significant improvement over its predecessor. The useful and consolidated concepts have been reloaded. Chapters have been added and some paragraphs have been written in collaboration with two experts, with whom I collaborate often when dealing with projects for constructing, renewing and repairing business brands or the personal brands of elite figures. The experts are close friends as well as professional specialists: Emanuela Lodolo, in regard to web

reputation, and Stefania Salardi, concerning the debate with institutional media (radio, TV, magazines).

My experience over the past few years has increased through continuous, open dialogue with people from different countries and experts in various fields. My knowledge has been reinforced by doing, thanks to my daily work as a trainer and consultant. My job's main objective is to disseminate messages, methods and ideas. In order to do so, I need to conquer the minds, hearts and interests of my customers so that they, by simply listening to me, will mobilize their energy, intelligence and informed actions toward new, defined and shared projects. In order to get committed employers, it's necessary that the society trusts its employers as individuals and cares about their interests. In the same way, employers need to trust to the business brand and in the future of the team they belong to. This explains why my contributions to business and personal brands are so close and so much in harmony. This book has been enriched by the persons I met on my way and with whom I worked with, for different reasons, such as public utilities, companies or associations. Businessmen, managers, figures from different fields (politics, arts, associations, public utilities, show business...) and also "white collars" and freelancers: They all provided great input, chiefly through their impressive experience and data, upon which the methodology of development and evolution of self-branding is based.

I don't see myself as a brand designer, nor as an expert in brand reputation or marketing. Nevertheless, this book offers a wealth of input. The text starts with the definition of brand (which is the foundation of my research) to achieve the SelfBrand, its development and defense. The book also includes inputs and interesting conversations about different styles, public-relations strategies, institutional media and web reputation, which are all important and useful tools (although they aren't the only ones) to create a SelfBrand profile.

Because I studied deeply the literature about the brand applied to the individuals and self-marketing, I know how important it isn't to resist to change/transformation, but to learn how to live the change/transformation. Although the theoretical aspect is fundamental, action – meaning a methodology based on facts and the ability to predict the future – is the main premise of this book. Here is another reason to read this book: I'm pretty talented in solving problems practically, ability that was fundamental for me to organize my life and to increase the managing of the companies I worked with and those for which I continue to work as a consultant or trainer.

Occasionally the experts provide theoretical opinions, some other times they based their intuition on cases analyzed after "the game" was over. I have always found myself in the situation of having to "manage the game," in a practical way. If I was wrong, the consequence was tangible in terms

of diminished profit and human values. This is why my solutions are quick, practical and sensible. We can easily say it's difficult to find experts who can teach us how to "manage ourselves." It isn't always possible to apply to real-life situations theories taken from professional development or training courses. I'm very aware of this aspect, so in my training courses the practical aspects and first-hand experiences are elevated and the number of participants is limited. This allows all participants to interact with me. I know very well that there are fears and situations that can't be discussed in public and don't involve everyone in the group.

I didn't write a book about branding. Instead, I create an easy-to-read book that's useful as a means to get closer, to maintain the potential of your own brand – even at a very high level – in a reasonable, human way.

A new awareness was necessary and I needed to provide also some guide lines to efficiently defend the persons who follow my methodology and the ones who will follow it in the next future, from targeted attacks. *Our external communications produce an intangible value that becomes strong, either when it's an obstacle to our progress or when it requires a push in order to emerge. The choices with which accomplish it can be very different, so certainly they aren't the same for everyone.*

Personal and professional problems won't all be solved by a single, simple solution. However, if a person learns the method of the "informed action" that I suggest, he or she will achieve great and real advantages and this will make this person a little more happy.

With the term "informed action" I mean an ongoing work, based on a precise methodology, which teaches you not to stop and over-think things but it allows you to go constantly forward in order to succeed your final aim, through everyday practical solutions.

Self-branding isn't an abstract topic. It's based on personal and real characteristic of individuals, on their own skills, on their uniqueness and on what a given person wants to gain.

Once it was built, a thought irradiated starry light, influencing everything on his journey.

Lynn Mac Taggart

A person is a combination of roots, culture, values, habits, visions, aims and firm beliefs that are at the base of self-branding. That combination, as a formula guarantees uniqueness. The right intention and a correct communication will be the vehicle that takes us to the goal, doing so through informed choices. I hope you'll enjoy the reading, and I certainly hope you'll appreciate the experience.

Donatella Rampado

What a Brand Is

*“Start from the beginning,” Alice said.
Lewis Carroll’s, Alice in Wonderland*

1. How is a brand born?

Let’s start by clarifying the definition of a brand. According to the online dictionary Sansoni 2014, the word “brand” means a brand name, trademark of a product and “labeling with fire.” According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), a brand name is “a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, a drawing or a combination of all these elements, with the aim of identifying the goods and the services of a seller or a group of sellers, in order to distinguish them from the competitors.”

It was a short step from the labeling of cattle, or “*brandr*” from its northern origin, to the labeling of products and services. Since that time, producers of goods and providers of services have labeled their goods to distinguish them from those of their competitors. However, in the common marketing and business language and practice, the term “brand” has a more specific definition: It’s the awareness, reputation and trust that characterize a specific product or service as compared to other similar products and services offered by the market trade.

So, the term “brand” became part of the common language. Often, it’s linked to the logo (which is the text that usually accompanies a product, a service, a factory or a representative association), to the symbol, the image or the graphic representation of a name or of the acronym that identifies the association. The logo becomes a logotype when it (the text) is correlated with a symbol (the trademark).

The most common mistake that occurs when speaking about a brand is to confuse it with the logo. So, it's crucial to clarify the difference between the two: The brand isn't the logo.

Actually, the brand is a concept. It's about what a person or a company thinks, considers and believes when he or she reads and looks at the logo or listens to someone talking about that logo. It's about distinguishing between ourselves and others. It's about reputation. The brand is essentially made of the perceived (gaining the sense of the reality through the senses and the perceptions such as the sight, the hearing, etc.) and the representativeness that every consumer confers with respect to the brand. **So, we're talking about trust and reputation.**

The concept could be summarized in the following statement: *"I choose you because I feel myself represented by you; because I know your reputation, I share your same values, principles and emotions. I choose you, because I trust you."*

When do clients become faithful to the society? This occurs when the client connects an emotional value to the trademark or the service. So, every brand represents in itself a whole world with its own culture and values and, in some ways, it actually has its own personality.

The client will continue to choose that trademark or service if he feels he is represented by it or if he wants those values/emotions to become his own. The marketing should support the process of identification of the product and/or the service, distinguishing it from other, similar products and services. Otherwise, the only relevant aspect will be the price.

Search the term "brand" on Wikipedia, and you'll see the following:

"A successful brand has the following characteristics:

- Easy to pronounce;
- Easy to remember;
- Easy to recognize;
- Easy to translate;
- Suggests a connection to the image of the society;
- Attracts attention;
- Suggests characteristics and benefits of the product;
- Distinguishes the placement of the product respect to the competitors."

A good name is actually very important, particularly when society has to add a new product and/or service to its awareness of the market. If it doesn't turn into a brand, it won't help society survive in times of crisis.

So, how valuable is a good name that's easy to pronounce and remember if it doesn't evoke trust, respect, committed promises, culture or value? It will simply be a trade name amid a sea of trade names.

2. Why one should have a brand








A lot has been said, in recent years, about the value of a brand. Why is it essential to understand the importance of a brand, and why does marketing dedicate so much attention to it? To answer these questions, two points of view must be taken into consideration: the one from who is choosing the brand, and the one from who is suggesting it. We could even include the client and the seller, or the customer and the producer, just to make it easier.




The brand allows:

Table 1 - Promises of the brand

To the Producers	To the Customers
A tool to be identified/recognized quickly	Identification of the source of the product and/or service
A tool to copyright the product and/or service	Recognition of the producer as the one responsible for the product and/or service
Possibility of increasing the customers' loyalty to the product and/or service	Decreasing the risk of dissatisfaction
A way to connect unique qualities to the products/services	Optimization of time when searching the product and/or service
An advantage over competitors	Sharing the same values and emotions of the producer
Increased income	Decreasing the risk of "promises not kept"
Better possibilities of selecting talents	Expectation of an adequate post-sold assistance service
Enhancing the loyalty of employees	Expectation of consistent quality
Better, more efficient communication toward the customer	Expectation of constant, cohesive innovation

It is a relationship between the customer and the producer, a sort of agreement: the customer shows his loyalty and the producer guarantees a constant quality of the product or the service. In the past the communication competition among the companies was based on the quality of the product, afterwards we moved from the product to the quality of the service offered. Now days, it's necessary to apply a new strategy and find a new value, in order to loyal the customer. This value is perceived by the customers as the “plus” that make them choose that specific trademark instead of another. A strong brand ensures the loyalty of the customers and an increasing sell and re sell of the product. Consider some companies with a historically successful brands from 1925 onward, including Lipton Tea, Mercedes-Benz, Coca-Cola and others. In the Best Global Brand 2013 chart www.interBrand.com/en/best-global-Brands/2013/top-100-list-view.aspx we can find the following brands as the best in the world:

Position	Brand	Brand Name	Region/Country	Sector
1		Apple	United States	Technology
2		Google	United States	Technology
3		Coca-Cola	United States	Beverages
4		IBM	United States	Business Services
5		Microsoft	United States	Technology
6		GE	United States	Diversified
7		McDonald's	United States	Restaurants

Position	Brand	Brand Name	Region/Country	Sector
8		Samsung	South Korea	Technology
9		Intel	United States	Technology
10		Toyota	Japan	Automotive

Some brands are so strong that they're now used as nouns in everyday language, such as Bostik, Scotch and Rimmel.

The vulnerability of society continues to increase, no matter how the social, political or economic context is. The context is characterized by hyper-competition, hyper-offer and hyper-choice. To this we'll add the political instability and the norms that are often maintained without keeping in mind the higher needs of workers and society.

Producers don't even have the time to introduce a new product to the market, because immediately such a product is copied, imitated and sold at half-price. In this macro-scenario is born the need to develop a competitive advantage that is difficult to reproduce.

This benefit must be invisible and not duplicable. In this context, the reality of the brand took place and developed: to establish a connection with the customer, who recognizes the value and the reputation of the product and associate these elements to a positive response. Emotions and values guide our choices in regard to products, and they're able to influence our judgment.

I choose Mulino Bianco's biscuits because I think about my family.

I buy Nike because it stands for excellence in sportive clothes/equipment.

I buy products from Body Shop because I respect the environment.

What's the world's most desirable car? Ferrari is.

I use Nivea cream because it's the one I used when I was a child.

Where there's Coca-Cola, there are friends and smiles, watch the video:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bj3QLLTFDX8

I drink Evian water because it's the water that makes you feel younger.
 This is one of the most watched ad videos: <http://youtu.be/pfxB5ut-KTs>

Benefits, promises, values, reputation, love, identity and status are some of the untouchable and invisible beliefs that guide us when buying products. At this point in any of my workshops, the same question is always comes up: **If a company isn't multinational, can it still have a strong, recognized brand?** The answer is yes, of course it can. A micro-society can and should have a recognized brand for whatever its marketplace is. You've probably seen in your experience, a couple of cafés on the same street. However, one is working hard and the other is not. In the same way, you might have heard accountant complaining about not having a lot of clients and, the ones he has aren't good payers, while another one has so much clients that has to renounce to some work, as he can't follow all of them. For example, in Venice there are a lots of souvenir shops that sell the famous Venetian masks, although only few of them are worldwide known and recognized for the excellence in the artistic design, the historical laboratory or the creative innovation. As a main example, there are Cà Mancana (www.camacana.com) Bluemoon (www.bluemoonvenice.com), Atelier Marega (www.marega.it) and the very famous Atelier Nicolao (www.nicolao.com).

Even in small town we can notice how some shops have become part of the city, some historical shops have shut down and other, born from zero, have become a real reference point for the community.

It's now easy to understand why not only big companies, but even micro, small and medium companies are starting to invest in their brands and are working on the following main areas:

1. Developing a clear and strong identity;
2. Differing from the competition through their own values;
3. Attracting new customers;
4. Communicating to the market the invisible aspect;
5. Finding the intangible aspect in their own strength and uniqueness;
6. Consolidating the relationship within the stakeholders through trust (including producers, customers, collaborators, etc.).

If customers trust a specific brand and become loyal to it, they won't look for further information and won't wait long before buying its products/ services.

From an financial point of view, the brand allows a reduction of expenses for the data collection and, consequently, it also allows a better data elaboration on customers' needs on satisfaction. Therefore, the brand does increases the sales volume through the customers' loyalty.

*The best way to exceed the competitors is to floor them by becoming unforgettable. (Donatella Rampado, *The SelfBrand: Turn Yourself into an Authentic Brand*)*

3. Let's talk about brand reputation

If we don't change our direction, it is possible that we reach the destination we are following.
Ancient Chinese proverb

The brand reputation can be defined as the combination of mental associations and links that happen when reading the name of a company or talking about a trademark. It's about trust and reputation. The word reputation means the reputation (or **negative reputation**) of a subject (a person, an institution, a company, etc.). It's the consideration or esteem that the society has for this subject.

The meaning can change depending on the context in which it's used:

- In jurisprudence: the concept of reputation is also associated with the violation of the law for defamation and insult.
- In Economics: the concept of reputation is also associated with the society reputation and the reputational risk.
- In the Sociological area: the concept of reputation concerns the credibility that a certain subject has acquired within a specific group of people.

I believe it's essential to have a clear idea of the customer's needs, desires and values in order to succeed in the market, trade or field.

For doing so, it's necessary to design products and/or services able to satisfy the customers and able to represent them.

Brand reputation does force its way in, and becomes part of, this marketing program. Indeed, we need to wonder how the customer's knowledge of the brand, does affect his/her own buying power.

The buying power lies in how much the customer learned about that brand through direct and indirect experiences. The customer's personal experience has a strong relevance in leading the brand in the future.

The key questions the brand has to respond to are:

1. Who are you?
2. What do you do?