PERSONAL BRANDING:

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Background:

Personal branding is the chance to share with others who you are, what you know and what is important. It is about making yourself known for what you want to be known for. Personal branding creates awareness around your creditability, authority and visibility. And in this case, personal branding for businesses built on sole proprietorship with the product being the “soul” of the “sole” proprietor. Personal brand is what people say about you when you leave the room. Your Authentic Personal Brand is YOU distilled into a look, an attitude and a message that captures the interest of the people and attracts them.

WAYS TO DELIVER PERSONAL BRANDING

1. Resume
2. A Bio
3. Your Website
4. Your Social Media posts
5. How you dress.

Please note that we are a visual society so often what we see is what we believe. There are 22 Immutable Laws of branding developed by Al Ries. These laws help establish your brand and they are easy to remember.

THE 22 IMMUTABLE LAWS OF PERSONAL BRANDING

1. The Law of Expansion: The power of a brand is inversely proportional to its scope. Trying to be all things to all people undermines the power of the brand. The strength of brands lies in becoming synonymous with a single category. Brands that spread themselves across categories lose brand focus, identity, and ultimately market share.

Personal Branding:

• Don’t try and be a jack of all trades.

• It’s more likely you’ll shoot for something too big and become overwhelmed. When in doubt, overwhelm a small niche.

2. The Law of Contraction: A brand becomes stronger when you narrow its focus. By narrowing the focus to a single category, a brand can achieve extraordinary success. Starbucks, Subway and Dominos Pizza became category killers when they narrowed their focus.
Personal Branding:

• To build a personal brand, you must build expertise in a specific field i.e. one industry or function

• Identify that one category you’d like to be known for and work towards it with single-minded focus.

3. The Law of Publicity: The birth of a brand is achieved with publicity, not advertising. A new brand must be capable of generating favorable publicity in the media or it won’t have a chance in the marketplace. Anita Roddick built the Body Shop into a global brand with no advertising, but with massive amounts of publicity. On the other hand, Miller Brewing spent $50 million in advertising to launch a brand called Miller Regular. The brand generated no publicity and very little sales.

Personal Branding:

• Build subject matter expertise to a level where people would recommend you for it.

• When in need for a comment on a subject, you should be the first one that your professional network looks to hear from.

4. The Law of Advertising: Once born, a brand needs advertising to stay healthy. Sooner or later, a brand leader has to shift its branding strategy from publicity to advertising. By raising the price of admission, advertising makes it difficult for a competitor to carve out a substantial share of the market.

Personal Branding:

• You must actively advertise your skill-set to your network – by putting it up on your profile.

• Take up every sound bite opportunity or speaker opportunity or networking opportunity that comes your way.

5. The Law of the Word: A brand should strive to own a word in the mind of the consumer. If you want to build a brand, you must focus your branding efforts on owning a word in the prospect’s mind. A word that nobody else owns. Kleenex owns "tissue," FedEx owns "overnight," Volvo owns "safety."

Personal Branding:

• For the keyword that defines your niche area or skill set, do you rank #1 in Google & LinkedIn?

• Does your professional network associate you with that one word?

6. The Law of Credentials: The crucial ingredient in the success of any brand is its claim to authenticity. Coke is the real thing in the minds of many, even though the last "real thing" advertisement ran almost thirty years ago. A brand's credentials in a category as authentic, real, original, or the leader are very powerful indeed.
Personal Branding:

• To lend credence to your expertise, it is important to obtain some kind of certification in the subject.

• Scout for relevant business groups and associations you could become a member of.

7. The Law of Quality: Quality is important, but brands are not built by quality alone. Does a Rolex keep better time than a Timex? Does Hertz have better service than Alamo? Does a Montblanc pen write better than a Cross? Are you sure? The perception of quality, more than quality itself, is what builds a brand. And the best way to build a quality perception in the mind of consumers is by following the laws of branding.

Personal Branding:

• The promise of uniqueness and specialty, is bigger than the specialty itself. So while it is important to be known as the best writer / consultant / product manager, what is more important is the promise of being the best.

8. The Law of the Category: A leading brand should promote the category, not the brand. The most efficient, most productive, most useful aspect of branding is creating a new category. Customers don’t really care about new brands, they care about new categories. What was the market for cheap cars before Volkswagen? What was the market for home pizza delivery before Dominos? What was the market for in-line skates before Rollerblade?

Personal Branding:

• Be an evangelist for your chosen category. For example, Robert Scoble (scobleizer.com) promotes startups at the cutting edge of Web technologies and that has won him many assignments – Microsoft / Seagate / Rackspace. Similarly, Avinash Kaushik’s blog (kaushik.net) on Web Analytics landed him a plum position with Google. Both of them built a reputation by promoting the category and not themselves.

9. The Law of the Name: In the long run, a brand is nothing more than a name. In the short term, a brand needs a unique idea or concept to survive. But in the long term, all that is left is the difference between your brand name and the brand names of your competitors. Shorter names that are unique and memorable are far stronger than longer, vague or generic names.

Personal Branding:

• If you have a unique and memorable name, count yourself lucky.

• Those of you who have a common name, should strive to build a unique nick / identity / handle by which they could come to be known – this could be used as a username across different platforms or as an email ID or as part of a URL.

10. The Law of Extensions: The easiest way to destroy a brand is to put its name on everything. More than 90% of all new product introductions in the U.S. are line extensions. Line extensions destroy brand value by weakening the brand. The effects can be felt in
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diminished market share of the core brand, a loss of brand identity, and a cannibalization of the one’s own sales. Often, the brand extension directly attacks the strength of the core brand. Does Extra Strength Tylenol imply that regular Tylenol isn't strong enough?

**Personal Branding:**

• Don’t try and put your fingers in every pie. Once you’ve built a niche, keep it intact. A technology expert going ahead and reviewing movies on his/her blog is just the kind of thing you should look to avoid.

11. **The Law of Fellowship:** In order to build the category, a brand should welcome other brands. Consumers want to have choices. Choice stimulates demand. Healthy competition helps to build the category. The competition between Coke and Pepsi makes customers more cola conscious. Per capita consumption goes up.

**Personal Branding:**

• Do not shy away from recommending people in your peer group.

• Network with other experts in your domain and listen to what they have to say. If you write about a particular subject, link to other bloggers in the same domain – and give them credit for a well-written piece.

12. **The Law of the Generic:** One of the fastest routes to failure is giving a brand a generic name. The problem with a generic brand name is its inability to differentiate the brand from the competition. At your local health food store, you'll find Nature's Resource, Nature's Answer, Nature's Bounty, Nature's Secret, Nature's Way, Nature's Best, Nature's Plus, etc. Will any of these generic brands break into the mind and become a major brand? Unlikely.

**Personal Branding:**

• Avoid a generic nick / identity / handle such as ‘techexpert’ or ‘telecomguru’. While this may have its SEO (Search Engine Optimization) benefits, it will work against you in the long run.

13. **The Law of the Company:** Brands are brands. Companies are companies. There is a difference. Customer's think of brands, not companies. Procter and Gamble isn't Tide. General Motors isn't Cadillac. The brand itself should be the focus of your attention. Use the company name, if necessary, in a decidedly secondary way.

**Personal Branding:**

• It’s ‘You, the professional’ who is the brand here and not the food you eat or the clothes you wear or your personal relationships. Personal details should only be ancillary to your online identity and not the primary focus.

14. **The Law of Subbrands:** What branding builds, subbranding can destroy. Subbranding erodes the power of the core brand. Waterford is the leading Irish crystal maker. Introducing "cheap" Waterford as "Marquis by Waterford" only dilutes the Waterford brand. Subbranding attacks a brand's place in he mind of the prospect.
Personal Branding:

• Stick to your identity and do not dilute it by being a different person to different audiences at the same time.

• Classic case of personal brand erosion: Someone who wrote about gadgets for a geeky audience suddenly changed his writing style to reach out to laypersons. Suddenly, the quality of discussions around the articles become poorer and the expert lost his core audience.

15. The Law of Siblings: There is a time and place to launch a second brand. A second brand can be launched to focus on a new subcategory within the same product family. Toyota launched Lexus because the Toyota brand couldn't fill the luxury car category. The focus is on the brand, not the company. Customers buy a Lexus not because it's made by Toyota, but in spite of it.

Personal Branding:

• If you wish to reach out to 2 different kinds of segments amongst your audience, reach out to them through different platforms based on their individual needs.

• So if you are a blogger who wishes to engage a geeky audience and another one consisting of laypersons, write at 2 different URLs.

16. The Law of Shape: A brand's logotype should be designed to fit the eyes. Both eyes. A customer sees the world through two horizontally mounted eyes peering out of the head. For maximum visual impact, a logotype should have a horizontal shape. The ideal shape is 2¼ units wide by 1 unit high.

Personal Branding:

• While building your own brand, you should take in to account the way your audience sees the world.

• You need to put out your message in a way in which your chosen audience can easily digest it.

17. The Law of Color: A brand should use a color that is the opposite of its major competitor. Coke is red, and Pepsi is Blue. Hertz is yellow, and Avis is Red. Color consistency over the long term can help a brand burn its way into the mind.

Personal Branding:

• Be consistent in your style of expression.

• Just like you listen to a Pink Floyd or Nirvana for their particular sound or watch a Scorsese or Tarantino movie for their distinct treatment, evolve your own style of expression. And then stick to it.

18. The Law of Borders: There are no barriers to global branding. A brand should know no borders. The perfect solution to growth in a competitive market is not line extensions,
but building a global brand. A brand should have a consistent message globally, but must take into account the perceptions of its country of origin.

**Personal Branding:**

• As an expert, you should venture out in to the international arena and see what’s happening elsewhere and speak about it when the opportunity arises.

• Studying and speaking about international markets will add more value to your personal brand than gaining expertise on a different subject.

**9. The Law of Consistency**

A brand is not built overnight. Success is measured in decades, not years. This is the law which is violated most frequently. Once a brand occupies a position in the mind, the manufacturer often thinks of reasons to change. Markets may change, but brands shouldn't. They may be bent slightly, or given a new slant, but their essential characteristics should never be changed. Long-term, consistent programs might be boring, but they are also immensely powerful.

**Personal Branding:**

• Establish yourself and then be yourself. That is the safest way of being consistent and building equity. Even as you evolve as a person and professional, the change will then be linear and not incongruent.

**20. The Law of Change**

There are three situations where changing your brand is feasible: When your brand is weak or non-existent in the mind, when you want to move your brand down the food chain to a lower price and perception point, or when your brand is in a slow-moving field and the change is going to take place over an extended period of time. Remember, changing your brand is a long and difficult process. Change at your own risk!

**Personal Branding:**

• There are three situation in which you must revamp your personal brand: When you haven’t been able to establish yourself in your chosen domain, when the audience in your niche is too small or when a career in the chosen domain is not economically viable.

**21. The Law of Mortality**

No brand will live forever. Euthanasia is often the best solution. Branding are not immutable. They are born, grow up, mature, and eventually will die. Companies spend millions to save a dying brand, and won’t spend pennies to launch a new one. Opportunities for new brands and threats to old ones are constantly being created by the invention of new categories. The rise of PCs created opportunities for Compaq, Dell and Gateway, but put pressure on Digital, Data General and Wang.

**Personal Branding:**

• It always pays to anticipate the future that has already happened. If you haven’t instilled that habit, take an outsider’s view of your career on a regular basis and see where it’s headed.
• If your skill set is becoming obsolete, then it’s time to reset objectives and reinvent yourself.

22. The Law of Singularity: The most important aspect of a brand is its single-mindedness. What is a brand? A singular idea or concept that you own inside the mind of the prospect. It’s as simple or as difficult as that. What is Yahoo!? Is it a directory or a search engine or a news portal? It has lost it’s singularity. Google is search – for the Web, for pictures, for videos, for new, for blogs, for your PC, for your email, etc.

Personal Branding:

• What do people say about you while they introduce you to others? Observe this and discern that singular thing that defines you amongst your network. If there isn’t anything consistent, you need to work hard to build your personal brand. If there is and you dislike it, you need to work even harder at it.