



Be Distinct or Extinct
The Power of Your Personal Brand in Today's Changing Workplace

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That Brands create value, loyalty, and profound emotional experiences for customers is well understood. What is less appreciated is that the employee relationship to his employer and brand has changed.

Successful brand building is no longer just about the company's brand. It's about your personal brand and how you use your own distinction to deliver the brand promise of your organization. Developing your individual brand is an essential strategy in the new world of work.

In today's organizations, a heated search is on for new ideas and new ways to work in the new economy. It's about survival of the fittest. It's about maintaining a competitive edge amidst chaos. It's about achieving success when the stakes are ever higher and ever changing. Organizations and individuals must do nothing less than reinvent work to survive in the 21st century, and personal branding is a big part of that equation.

Brands are among the most strategic assets of any organization. They have tangible, financial value. And as Michael Goldhaber recently said in *Wired* magazine: *"If there is nothing very special about your work, no matter how hard you apply yourself, you won't get noticed and that increasingly means you won't get paid very much either."*

Tom Peters puts it this way: *"Be distinct, or extinct."* The authentic exploration of that which you care about most can help increase inspired performance for you and others. When we are encouraged to find what motivates and moves us, we can navigate and perform in truly inspired ways.

What are you known for? Are you a Michael, Oprah, or Martha? In the face of Intranets, Knowledge Capital Management Schemes, The Web, Globalization, and Global Deregulation, do you have the distinction to survive the corporate chopping block? Or, even better, do you have what it takes to quickly land an even better opportunity if your current job is eliminated? If not, developing your brand is a high stakes deal.



Here are five suggestions based on the Tom Peters book *The Brand You50* to help you be distinct:

1. **Ask yourself: What do I want to be known for? What do I want to stand for? Does MY work matter? Am I making a difference?** Personal brands help you survive when the yogurt is hitting the white-collar revolution fan. They also create opportunities.
2. **Perform a Personal Brand Equity Inventory:** Ask ten coworkers, family members and friends to write four words or descriptive phrases that best describe you. Look at the responses and ask yourself, "Is this what I want to be known for? How can I develop my own distinctive brand?"
3. **"Inc." Yourself:** *Fast Company* magazine calls it Free Agent Nation and a Unit of One. Begin by viewing yourself as an independent contractor who gets hired for doing work worth paying for. Every moment and every micro event has a message. It adds or detracts from your brand image. Become your own public relations firm, and talk about the value you offer.
4. **Develop Competence:** You have got to be noticeably good at s-o-m-e-t-h-i-n-g. Your skill package must be stunning and of significant value. How are you different in valuable and compelling ways? Not Michael Jordan different, but on your way to achieving some noticeable distinction. Be very precise.
5. **Develop a ONE-EIGHTH Page Yellow Page Ad for YOUR Personal Brand:** Imagine people are shopping for your service. What can you offer them that is summarized succinctly and with flair that no one else can offer?

The white-collar revolution requires a new way of looking at our work and our worth at work. Now more than ever, a deeper dialogue about survival in the work world is required. Welcome to Free Agent Nation.

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