

Personal Branding



THE ELYSIUM SERIES

COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY MARCO CARRUBBA

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To explore more on this and other guides please have a look at marcocarrubba.com.



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I took the cover photo in 2018 @London – see flickr.com/photos/carrubbam/28990697478

I am not affiliated with any of the companies I reference in the text: they are simply the ones I know of and occasionally the ones I personally use.

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An aerial photograph of a dense forest. The trees are a mix of green and yellow, indicating autumn. A thick layer of white mist or fog hangs over the lower slopes, creating a hazy, ethereal atmosphere. The forest extends to the horizon, showing rolling hills or mountains in the distance.

Elysium

noun [U] /i'lɪz.i.əm/

Place or condition of ideal bliss or complete happiness

Hello!

Sometimes it's good to simplify things.

I regularly find a number of challenges in my job and hobbies, and as a good learn it all person I try to come up with solutions. Simplified solutions.

Recently, I have taken the habit of documenting them so I can structure my conclusions and also so they can be readily available. So, I thought, why not sharing my findings with others and coming up with a series of guides?

So here you are - welcome to this issue of the Elysium Series, providing an accessible solution and some useful thought provokers for a specific aspect of the agile and digital modern lifestyle.

Covering a full spectrum of challenges, these guides ensure that one can plan, create, and execute consistently.

So, binge on a different kind of content with the Elysium Series and hopefully you will also benefit from my discoveries, **annotations** and **questions** and hopefully come up with your own solutions, whilst at the same time saving some of your precious time!

I hope you enjoy this series of personal hackathons and that they are useful to you – drop me a line, I'd love to know your feedback!

A handwritten signature in gold ink that reads "Marco Canzolla". The signature is fluid and cursive, with varying line thicknesses and ink saturation.

COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY MARCO CARRUBBA

MARCO IS A LEADER AND VISIONARY WITH 25+ YEARS STRONG EXPERIENCE, HAVING CREATED AND LED GLOBAL TEAMS AND BUILT MANY STATE OF THE ART PRODUCTS FOR MANY ORGANISATIONS IN THE UK, USA AND EUROPE.

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You might have heard that a business brand is of paramount importance to the success of a company: brands help identifying and differentiating goods and services from the competition, so that it can be easily communicated and marketed. A rather intangible asset, yet probably the one that mainly speaks to the heart, mostly emotional, ultimately able to influence a choice.

A brand is what people feel about a product or a service.

If you think branding does not make the difference, think again. See how curating a brand led to huge diversity in perception between a knock off brand in the market for thirty years and a few days of haute couture re-branding in Paris Fashion Week in [this video](#).

Now that you are with me, let me challenge you: what if the company was YOU Co.?

Exactly the same concepts outlined above apply to your personal brand. With a fundamental difference: even if you didn't make any attempts to create a personal brand, it would certainly already exist. You interact with people and the world, both online and in person and people already talk about and have an opinion of you: what you say, how you relate to others, what you do.

A personal brand is what people feel about you.

Normally, it is more about how to re-gain control of your personal brand, rather than building one.

Essentially, everything that you do and say has an impact on how the others perceive you. A personal brand is a reflection of your skills, talents, character and passions and how these are perceived by others.

Your personal brand is all about the real you as a human being, who has interesting stories to share and powerful knowledge to pass on to others.

Many different factors contribute to your personal brand: the way that you interact with others, how you communicate online, what are your opinions on facts and discussions and ultimately the types of stories you tell. It can also incorporate visual variables, such as the photographs you publish.

You, my friend, are your personal brand.

Personal branding is a fantastic way of empowering you to make decisions on how to take control over how people see you. But it also comes with many other benefits. Below are some of the most significant benefits that you will gain by building your personal brand.

YOU CONTROL YOUR BRAND IMAGE

- Having control on your brand is fundamental. **You control the narrative and present your audience what you want them to see**, both in a day to day relationship as well as managing glitches and special events
- **You can change course.** Should interests change, mistakes be made, or simply new skills and new purposes be established then it is ok to appear different - provided you explain the reason of the change to your followers.

YOU ARE MORE VISIBLE

- **You become more identifiable as a person.** By establishing a personal brand you become more accessible and more discoverable: people will be able to find you with a [simple Google search](#).
This is not just about being there on the on-line world: it will also change the perception the others have on you in person.
- **Your relationships will flourish.** It can be difficult to nourish a relationship with your audience, but with a strong personal brand you can expect people to continue to come back to your marketing channels (website or mailing list or other online presence) and look for you on a regular basis.

YOU ARE MORE TRUSTWORTHY

- **Your credibility and authority will grow.** The more credibility you have, the more likely people will be to invest their time in you. In order to build credibility, you must share valuable, information-rich content with your audience.
You can leverage your personal brand to educate people who are interested in what you know and what you do.
- **You can leverage your brand to build a larger network.** The more your brand is recognized, the more other professionals will be happy to interact with you. You will both benefit of the enlarged relationship.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN

- **Opportunities will come your way.** A personal brand will generate new opportunities for you as people will come and look for you: they will want to leverage your skills and knowledge and they will approach you to propose new exciting partnerships and projects.
- **You will discover old and new passions.** Creating content and documenting your journey somehow simply means that you will have to get out and do something. Document yourself, research new things, speak to people. This will eventually mean that you will spend more time in frequenting communities in real life, travelling to discover new places, look for the unusual. This is good.
- **Uncovering new things will be useful and fun.** Not knowing where you will end up will stimulate new learnings. These will create new skills and interests, and you will be able to feed those back into enriching your personal brand.

Since personal branding refers to the process of establishing your public persona, you need to carefully and accurately communicate your values, beliefs, goals, and purpose.

It is all about discovering exactly what separates you from everyone else in the world, what makes you fascinating.

Whilst taking control of your personal brand puts you in the driver's seat, there may still be situations where you do not have full control, as every single action or conversation could represent a misstep and change things. However, you can certainly take actions to keep it in the right direction.

Mind you - it's not about being fake, rather it is about curating and celebrating the aspects of your own personality and presenting yourself in the best possible light.

CREATE A PERSONAL VISION

The art of building a strong personal brand rests on authenticity and uniqueness: tap into your genuine and individual qualities and successes that define your identity and personality. Bear in mind that you also must have boundaries: for many entrepreneurs, for example, family is off limits. Others position their passions before their job. Personally, I do not want my Facebook to be part of my brand, as I think this to be meant for my family and friends only.

Before you begin to present your persona to the world, decide what you will and will not share with your followers: you do not necessarily need to reflect every detail of your private life.

The first step to creating your personal brand is to organize your thoughts and create your personal brand vision. This represents how you live your personal and professional life, and consequently how you want yourself to be perceived by others. There is no good or bad, you decide.

This vision will eventually drive all priorities and actions for your branding strategy.

List the values that are most important to you. Think about the people, the situations, the places that make you happy and you will find values. As a second step, identify your passions. These are the things you like to do when you are in your own time.

The mix of the above two items will be the basis of your personal vision.

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Once the vision is set, you need to determine your audience.

As in all communications, the content and tone of your assets as well as the communications tactics will vary depending on the audience. If you are establishing your personal brand to look for a job, you are positioning yourself to a potential employer. If you are looking to connect to a community of people, you are speaking to peers and influencers.

Whatever the audience, you need to identify it and connect with a language they understand.

And remember: every interaction you have with your audiences is an opportunity to reinforce your brand.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AS A BRAND

Some people never bother with personal branding simply because they do not believe they are a brand.

You become a brand the moment you put yourself out there. And when I say out here, I mean both on the Internet and in your in-person interactions – at work, attending a conference or simply networking.

Elon Musk, for example, started PayPal. And Tesla, SpaceX, Hyperloop, SolarCity, OpenAI among many. All these ventures have something in common: their founder. Elon is one of the most powerful personal brands today. He embraces his personal brand and thus he can control it.

You have to do the same.

KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

You need to honestly recognize your strengths and weaknesses, so you can come off as authentic. It may be challenging to do this from your point of view, so I invite you to share your personal branding project with your friends and colleagues and ask them about yourself. You will be amazed to find out how consistent the opinions about you are. Normally, this process would help you to avoid appearing as a perfect being, able to provide all answers in the world. Like everybody of us, you will excel in certain areas and will need to learn in other areas.

You simply want to find the right balance and appear human. And the only way to do that is through the understanding of your weaknesses and strengths. Finding these out for oneself can be tricky, so my suggestion is that you find somebody in your acquaintances and friends that can help you identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Building your personal brand requires you to be honest about what you know and don't know.

HARNESS YOUR PERSONALITY

Start with the most unique thing about you: your personality.

Personality will represent your super power that will set you apart from your competition. Whether you are an outgoing, a creative or a charismatic person. Any character trait will be instrumental to sharing your skills, your knowledge and ultimately will attract like-minded people.

BUILD AN ON-LINE PRESENCE

Whether you create your own personal website or use an established platform from which to share your content and activities or a combination of either is not important. It is important to be there. On-line, I mean.

There are many options these days, and each of them may be particularly suited to a specific content: if you like writing, you may want to have a blog. If you like photographing, you may want to showcase your work on a specialized platform. Or simply, you are a chatter and you want to use LinkedIn to convey your opinions publicly.

Today, it is natural almost expected to fragment the conversation in different virtual places – every one of them has its peculiar characteristic and its relevant audience and you only need to be on the platforms that matter to you and your audience. However, **it's important to meticulously plan out how you're going to implement each element and then connect all of them into a coherent story.**

Be sure to maintain consistency with your brand, regardless of the communications channel. When people want to learn more about you, they will search for you on several social outlets and it is good to see the same you everywhere. To do that, it is best to use homogeneous visual communication to tell your story: the same way brands are obsessed with colours, typography, logos and visuals, a strong personal branding presence needs to be curated. Presenting yourself in a consistent manner will help you control the audience perception of your personal brand.

Making regular use of great-looking photos and videos to reinforce your personal brand is also an excellent way to take advantage of the visual nature of the human brain: high-quality, authentic photos and videos will play a crucial role in delivering the personality of your brand and add a layer of trust and appeal.

Lastly, it would be better to showcase your story telling from a single starting point, an aggregator where people can find you and appreciate the dots connecting your many manifestations, characteristics and activities. The best option is actually to develop a [personal website](#), together with a mailing list that can broadcast your activities and keep the conversation going.

You can automate many publishing tasks, so that you can initiate content distribution from a few platforms and have it amplified automatically to others.

Most importantly, monitor what happens to your brand regularly: you can easily set up an [alert](#) and instruct it to look around for your name.

ALWAYS PROVIDE VALUE

In the brand market, information is your currency. People follow your brand because they can learn from you. This is not necessarily only about creating content. It extends to the on-line conversations. It touches the interactions that you have in your networking. It is about the interviews that you release.

Avoid sharing content or making comments that do not provide any value for the reader.

Also, you should be sharing and producing content very regularly. Adjust the frequency and types of content based on the audience presence: not being there consistently at the (same) right moment simply means losing an opportunity to be heard. There are many tools that can help publishing content regularly, I personally use [Buffer.com](#) to publish my stuff at a paced rhythm, regularly adjusting the best time of the day to amplify content.

ALWAYS SHARE WITH A PURPOSE

There should always be a very good reason for posting new content or sharing a comment or announcing a new gig: do not forget that your audience is looking to get some news or be part of an emotion. Never disappoint your audience, as people might never come back because they may think you have anything of significance to offer and they may look somewhere else.

Another fantastic way to build your personal brand is to interact with other well-known brands to find influencers, entrepreneurs or simply peers in related industries.

Identify like-minded people and reach out to them regularly: by asking questions, by commenting on their posts, by sharing news or even by offering a coffee. You may find that your competition works actually better as a friend and that if you start interacting together both brands will benefit. When you create something with another professional, you each get access to the other's network. This is so powerful.

Just make sure you find the right balance and you do not get shadowed by the other brand. Be proud and confident of your skills and interactions and you will shine.

REINVENT YOURSELF FREELY

It is ok to change: if you make a mistake, or change direction, or charter new territories you can present a new persona to your audience. However, in order to do that you need to be honest with your audience and share the reason: it needs to be a journey and you need to walk with your followers hand in hand.

1. Define your own personal mission statement:
 - determine your personal boundaries,
 - identify your passions,
 - figure out your values.
2. Identify your audience(s)
3. Create your brand identity:
 - colours,
 - tagline,
 - tone of message,
 - imagery / videography style,
 - hashtags
4. Establish your personal website and a blog:
 - a standalone site (with an html5 site or [standalone WordPress](#)), or
 - [Wordpress.org](#), or
 - [Squarespace](#), or
 - [Wix](#), or
 - [Weebly](#), or
 - [About.me](#)
5. Create your mailing list to regularly broadcast news and updates:
 - [Mailchimp](#)
 - [Have you thought about a creative name for the mailing list?](#)
6. Establish your on-line presence: create your [LinkedIn](#) profile, [Twitter](#) account, [500px/Flickr/Instagram](#) for photography, Vimeo/YouTube for videography, [Medium](#) for writing or any other specialist social network that you may want to leverage to show your knowledge and passion.
 - [Which social channels do you like most and which do you think are beneficial for building your brand?](#)
7. Create your personal business card.
8. Set-up a Google alert for your name+surname
 - [Google](#)
9. Arrange automatic content amplification:
 - via the social tool itself if available, e.g. when posting to Instagram select options to amplify to Twitter, or
 - automate via [IFTTT](#)
10. Create and publish content, amplify on personal site, blog and mailing list:

- Buffer
- Before posting anything, think if the content will offer new information, if an opinion will generate a useful conversation or simply if an image will set the emotions going. What is your preferred type of content? Videos, photos, writing, podcasts?
- When is the last time that you re-purposed info which you compiled into a stand-alone piece of content?
 - Are you using a tool to manage your postings?

 11. Comment, like, ask questions in your extended social.

- Have you engaged in on-line conversations lately?

 12. Keep your social profiles alive by publishing any relevant update.

 13. Create and nurture relationships, both online and in person.

- What friendly brand can you connect to?
- What topics do you consider yourself an expert, so you can sustain interesting conversations about?
- What new exciting projects or interactions should you pursue with other brands, in order to increase your brand awareness?

14. Adjust your persona and re-brand yourself, if needed.

 → Recurring task