

Careers

I Am My Biggest Project

New Horizons For Executives

Chapter 2 | Personal Marketing

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Amrop

Leaders For What's Next

Personal Marketing

Where's the sweet spot?

Each one of us is unique in our own special way. Whilst there's no pre-defined norm for 'competitive advantage', there are frameworks that can help us prepare to be different.

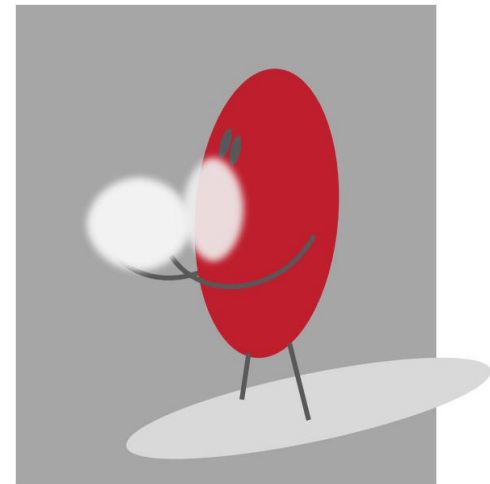
First, we must be able to imagine our ideal role – the one that helps us achieve our objectives. This means knowing what we want to become. And this in turn depends on two lines of enquiry: what we already are and the effort we'll make to develop.

Now we can perform a gap analysis - and take steps to close that gap.

Our analysis may surprise us. We may find that some of our characteristics deviate in a positive way from our aspired role stereotype. Herein lies our competitive advantage.

For example, imagine that your self-assessment reveals an aptitude for observation and analysis developed over your career. Could this put you in line for leading disruptive innovation?

Once we have identified our zones of competitive advantage, the next step is to leverage and monetize these. It may mean further developing and refining our advantages, to the point where our differentiation is crystal clear. (The opposite is to passively let our advantages quietly shrink on the vine – a wasted opportunity!).



Take Luis. In his first decade after graduating, Luis worked in financial management. Thanks in part to Luis' contribution, his organization transformed itself from an undynamic 'also-ran' into a competitive FMCG player.

His solid university education in management, combined with the knowledge he accumulated in financial management, put Luis into the line of succession for CFO. Once he held the position, he was exemplary. He fulfilled his responsibilities to internal and external clients, developed his team at a good pace, and was well-perceived by stakeholders.

What's more, his transversal activities gave Luis an over-arching vision of the business. He began to understand the impact of specific actions on the company's growth, and became increasingly attuned to market trends.

It became increasingly clear to Luis that if he could just pursue a few more years in this setting, he could expect to be selected for general management.

Instead, Luis shifted to a senior business development role. He realized that he had developed outstanding communication skills and the ability to influence. He also realized that he could deploy these skills in combination with his analytical and numerical track record, to position himself as a strategic negotiator. And his approach paid off.

Luis had figured out that despite never having studied sales and marketing, his analytical profile and finance experience were strong differentiation factors, evidence of skills increasingly appreciated in the business development arena.

Personal Marketing

From moving as many units as possible, contemporary marketing, like business as a whole, has moved on. Today, it's all about sustainable, win-win relationships. Business leaders and investors alike increasingly understand that a *win-lose* mentality may create such reputational damage that the apparent victor ends up in a losing position. Like a boomerang that returns and hits its thrower on the nose.

From consumer goods, to ideas and social programs, today's marketing techniques are applied to political systems, many aspects of social life, and the subject of this piece – our careers.

Levitt, Kotler, Drucker... a succession of marketing gurus have drummed into us the importance of thinking about our product or service in terms of our clients and consumers. This principle has withstood the test of time. Digitization and social media – channels that saturate the market with 'noise' - have only served to confirm the age-old validity of *being relevant*.

However, when it comes to personal marketing in practice, theories fall by the wayside. Too many executives I encounter, people with a fine grasp of business, not only fail to take an outside-in view of themselves, but miss the inside-out perspective too: their own vision, needs, and abilities.

Personal marketing is about creating a sustainable image of ourselves, one that truthfully and consistently represents us, and addresses an audience to whom our specific profile matters.

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Building your brand prism

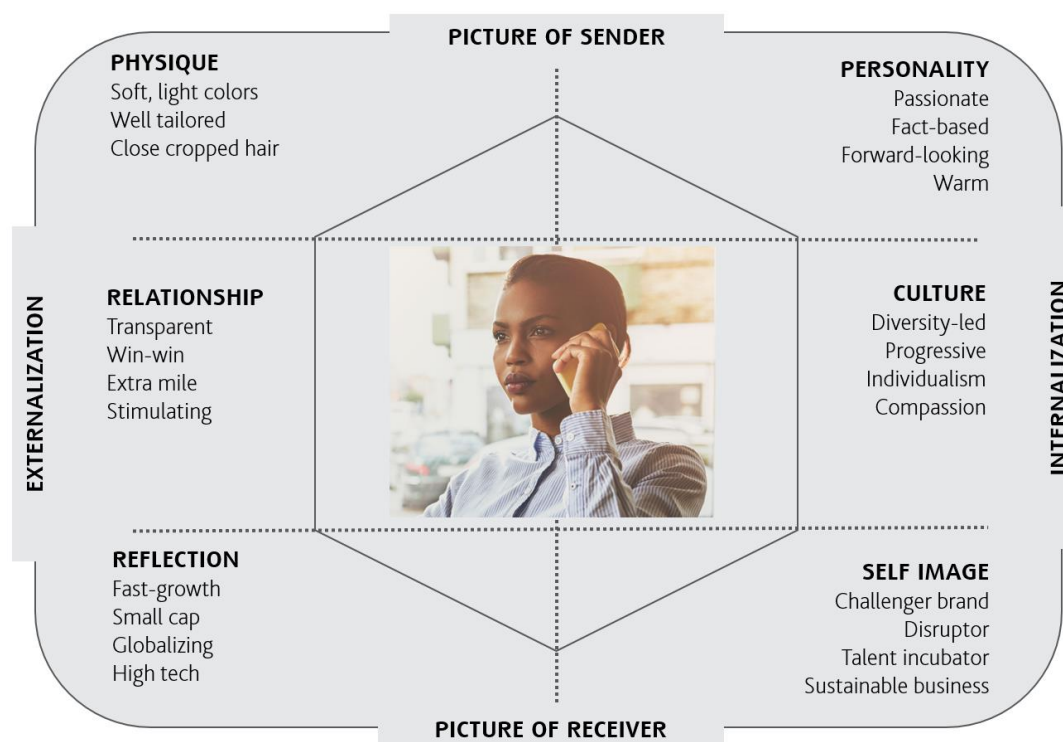
When we think about Apple, Disney, L'Oréal, or our own organizations, what are the first images that spring to mind? Companies who are fighting to grab the attention of stakeholders and secure their loyalty rely on a clearly-defined and compelling departure point.

Developed in the 1990's by Jean-Noël Kapferer, the *brand prism* is a model to structure this departure point. It can be an invaluable approach to your personal marketing strategy. The brand prism has six dimensions – adapted here to a personal brand prism.

- 1 **Physique:** your tangible, visible features
- 2 **Personality:** your main traits
- 3 **Relationship:** how you treat your organization/clients
- 4 **Reflection:** the main characteristics of your ideal organization/client group
- 5 **Culture:** your values, what you stand for
- 6 **Self-image:** how your ideal organization/client views itself

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Here is a brand prism - inspired by a real example of a stand-out executive.



Building your 7P model

You're almost certainly familiar with the 7P marketing model. However, you may be surprised by how well it has stood the test of time. It is based on the 4P model originally published in 1960 by American marketing professor E. Jerome McCarthy in *'Basic Marketing. A Managerial Approach'*. (The textbook entered its 19th edition in 2013).

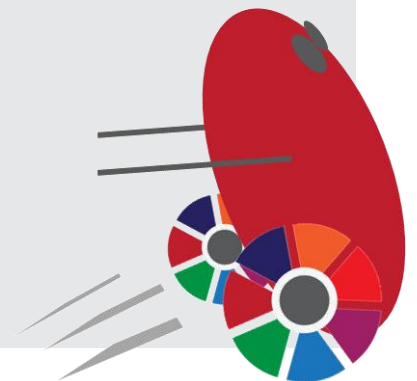
1981 saw the addition by two more scholars, Bernard H Booms and Mary Jo Bitner, of three new elements - extending the 4-point model beyond products, to services.

The 7P model can be our basis to perform the next step of our exercise in personal marketing.



Target Market

If we have worked out our personal brand prism, we have mapped out a stereotype of our target market– as this is related to the 'reflection' and 'self-image' dimensions of the brand prism. Our task is now to make the connection between us and that target market (the organization, organizations, or other parties who will buy our product our service).





Product

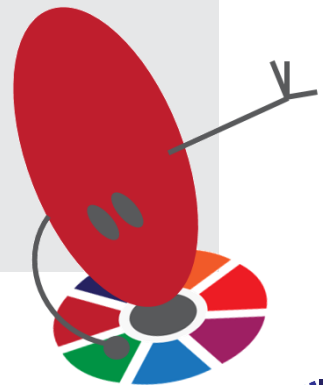
If we were a product, what would we look like? Thinking of ourselves as a product (or better still, a service) may seem like a rather alienating idea. Yet it is precisely because it is alienating that it helps us take an objective view, to capture and express our difference, our added value. In doing this, we must take advantage of our own lifelong R&D process – our foundations (family, education) and the circumstances that shaped and refined us (professional experiences, social stimuli, extra-curricular interests). But above all we must filter out our golden seeds, extract and sow them, cultivating and nourishing them so that they grow. And the process of learning, change and personal innovation is continuous and endless.



Promotion

Meeting our audience involves selecting the best physical and digital channels for our messaging: networking, conferences, social media, a press column, an executive search firm (and/or digital substitute). Groups are also invaluable: university alumni, sporting or cultural.

Focus, shaping our message for our target audience, is critical, and often overlooked. I frequently meet senior candidates who shoot in all directions, waste energy, incur dissatisfaction and frustration, and gradually lose all sense of optimism and opportunity as a result. Conversely, others send me an 'optimized' CV – optimized not only in its targeting and structure, but in the evidence it provides of learning and development. So do be selective and demanding on yourself and others. Send your personal data only to executive search consultants who have the gravitas to properly connect with you, understand, evaluate and promote you in a mutually beneficial way. And if you choose to be present on a digital platform, make sure that the setting promotes your 'premium brand' in a way that works for you and your audience. Furthermore, keep your digital profile up to date, presenting yourself truthfully, accurately, and in your best possible light.





Price

Compensation refers to the whole package of earnings: basic salary, variable bonuses, benefits (transportation, insurance, children's schooling, relocation, etc.). The correlation between function and compensation lies in:

- usefulness or necessity
- difficulty, (hierarchical or lateral exposure, technical difficulty)
- personal risk (uncertainty, insecurity)
- supply and demand.

The bottom two layers of Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' - 'Physiological' and 'Safety', are perhaps those where economic capacity is most vital. Yet the financial cost of securing them is rising across the globe. Moreover, all five layers of Maslow have a relationship with compensation. The top layer, 'Self-Actualization' requires that the lower conditions be met. And at that level, adequate compensation allows us to maintain social relationships, to access art, leisure, and travel. Finally, when it comes to a 'self-actualizing' career shift, a solid financial basis can also enable us to take calculated risks.

What are the constituents of each level in your 'hierarchy of needs?' What do you truly value or need? What does it cost? What could you drop, or substitute? How are your needs changing as you mature? Given all of this, what is your price, and what is the value that you bring that will justify it?

As many industries, businesses and functions that were once highly prized die out and new ones emerge, how might your value (and so your price) be changing? Pricing ourselves demands that we identify and investigate what we truly need, and the external and internal shifts most relevant to us.



Place

We now know, if we have done our homework, (see page 5) what our target market is – the 'sweet spot' organizations, or clients. Now we need to determine how and where we are able to deliver the product or service that is us. Thinking about my potential stakeholders, where are they based? In which geographical location/s? To what extent am I (and my family members) prepared to relocate and indeed, adapt? Is my own geographical location even relevant for my target, or could I deliver as much value from a remote/virtual location?



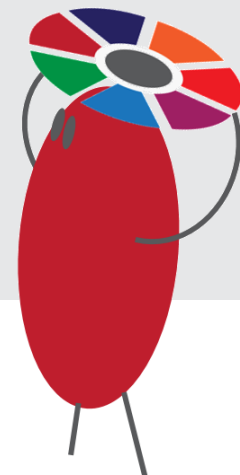
Process

Process concerns how we are going to deliver our product or service in this evolving world. For example, as virtual and/or fluid teams become more commonplace, the ability to communicate with shifting groups of people, often at distance, is becoming key. Leaders must build engagement and trust, also between different cultures, creating clarity, facilitating a diverse, efficient and productive exchange of viewpoints. As digitization redefines the workplace, one must ask, how adept am I at working on digital platforms, using the latest digital tools in my own 'supply chain'? And in general, how open am I to improving my delivery, proactively seeking feedback, developing and learning, testing and failing? This can be particularly difficult when we step into a new environment where trust needs to be built, and the spotlight is on. Wise decision-making is becoming more prized: the ability to navigate complexity, solve ethical dilemmas, to take a holistic and sustainable view of business performance, rather than focusing only on the short term. What is your 'wise decision-making' quotient?



Physical Environment

What physical environment do you naturally tend to create around yourself? What does that say about you? To what extent is it important for you to translate its characteristics into your next professional environment? And indeed, where should that environment be? You may ask yourself: am I still fulfilled by working in an urban landscape, or do I seek more connectivity to nature in the day-to-day? How important is it to me to work in an ecologically sustainable setting? Do I want or even need a permanent office? To be surrounded by colleagues? How would I feel about an agile or mobile office environment, with less face-to-face contact? How will this change my professional and social interactions, and indeed, what kind of interactions do I seek? In short, what will give me a sense of mutual empathy, well-being, comfort and fulfillment?





People

Imagining that we have temporarily attained our desired state, (noting that nothing is permanent), our task is to share our 'product' or 'service' with others and with the society of which we are part.

A mature executive is therefore concerned with the role he or she plays in a wider sense. What societal role do you play, or want to play? How can your knowledge and activities be most useful? How do you contribute to the well-being and advancement of your entourage? Only by adding value are we valued.

Developing ourselves through personal marketing enriches both our private and professional life, for example by helping us to face difficulties in a more optimistic way and to empathize with others.

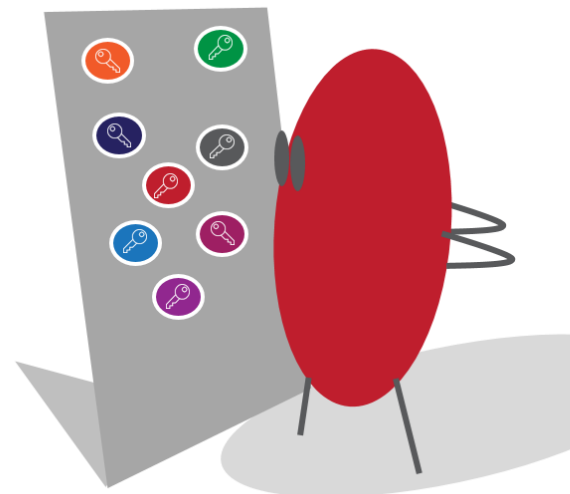
Becoming an expert in personal marketing means adding value, becoming more influential, accomplished and fulfilled, and as such, being a positive force in our environment.

Personal marketing is more than an analytical process. It is an attitude.

Personal Marketing Excellence – 8 keys

If we can apply the qualities that enable us to lead others to leading (and marketing) ourselves, we're on the path to personal marketing excellence. Just like a good leader, a leading brand has a positive influence on its environment and creates a climate of trust around it. It is sought out when solutions are needed. A leading brand creates clarity, consolidates and coordinates. It puts itself at the center of a feedback loop. It helps others, individually and collectively, to strive for better, helping them to fulfill themselves. And today's leading brand is a responsible brand - it represents generosity, sharing, altruism and has the capacity for civic and societal maturity. How close are you to being a leading brand?

In conclusion | see next for 8 keys to personal marketing excellence, and becoming a leading brand.



8 Keys to personal marketing excellence

1 **VISION**
A clear perception of what he or she does, and why. Works towards this higher purpose, continually finding improvements to his or her way of being and working, facilitating the path of others. Sees beyond the present moment, can predict what others may fail to notice.

2 **OPTIMISM***
Processes difficult feedback, turns it into a learning opportunity. Looks for the silver lining, and as such, enjoys better psychological and physical health.

8 **MATURITY**
Engages in ongoing, daily, emotional development, manages his or her emotions and helps others to do the same. E.g., knows how to manage a conflict without creating new challenges or imbalances.

3 **INTEGRITY**
Ambitious yet respecting limits, without harming or deceiving. Knows the downside of exaggerated ambition, is alert to pretention, greed, the ethical slippery slope. A trusted brand delivers on promises.



4 **SOLIDARITY**
Stops and helps without being asked. Has an 'esprit de corps' – acting on the knowledge that cohesion and unity helps us more easily achieve our personal and collective goals.

7 **EMPATHY**
Values the work of partners or employees, demonstrably recognizes their merits and learns from them. Identifies with others, trying to understand their point of view. Generously takes the time to understand alternative perspectives before assessing or judging.

6 **PATIENCE**
Has a sense of opportunity – knows how to create and seize opportunities at the right time. Is also resilient, with the ability to withstand and work through frustration.

5 **VISIBILITY**
Volunteers for projects and tasks that can be a good growth challenge. Has the courage to be exposed to attention and criticism, to exit the comfort zone.

*Studies associate optimism with well-being. Both psychological (self-esteem, stress resistance), and physical (cardiovascular health, immune system, surgery recovery rates).



Bibliography

This article series is adapted from the original book, 'Eu Sou o Meu Maior Projecto', (Maria da Glória Ribeiro, Manuscrito Editora, 2016)

See also: 'Liderança para a Sustentabilidade - A Voz de Quem Lidera em Portugal', Maria da Glória Ribeiro, with Professors Miguel Pina e Cunha, Nova School of Business and Economics, and Arménio Rego, Universidade de Aveiro, (Actual Editora, 2013).

Additional input to this article was provided by Steffi Gande, Global Marketing Director, Amrop.

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