

Leading Effectively e-Newsletter

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Are You Taking Charge of Your Personal Brand? An interview with Dorie Clark, author of Reinventing You

Learning and professional growth meets brand marketing in <u>Reinventing You</u>, a new book from Dorie Clark.

Clark, a marketing and strategy consultant, frequent contributor to *Harvard Business Review* and *Forbes*, and adjunct professor at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, says reinvention requires a combination of self-awareness, goal-setting and effort — as well as a strategic investment in communicating who you are. She recently spoke with CCL.

CCL: The idea of personal branding has been around for a while. Your book brings it up-to-date. Why is it important to give attention to your brand and consciously reinvent it?

Clark: The business world is moving faster and faster. Jobs and entire industries are changing in a matter of years. If you want to stay current and be recognized for what you bring to the table, you need to be reinventing yourself as a constant process. Growth and learning should be a habit for all of us professionally.

Each month the Premium subscribers of *Leading Effectively*



have access to an interview with a thought leader, author or expert. Through these interviews, we offer different perspectives on topics related to leadership. Featured in the May 2014 issue was author Dorie Clark.

That said, your efforts don't get you very far unless other people recognize them. You don't want other people to have a vision of you that is stuck five years in the past. You want them to know what you are interested in and capable of today. And that's where personal branding comes in. You need to be deliberate about what messages you are sending.

CCL: What are the key elements of personal branding?

Clark: There are three main components: The first is getting clear on your current brand. You are not a blank slate — people think *something* about you. It's useful to get a sense of what your reputation currently is so you can evaluate how closely it matches what you wish it would be.

The second is getting clearer and refining your vision of what you would like your brand to be. What do you want people to say about you when you leave the room? Are there skills to gain or steps to take to get closer to that brand?

The third is the importance of living your brand. Your personal brand is far greater than what you say about yourself or your elevator pitch. It is every impression people pick up on, from how you dress to who you associate with, to what they find about you when they Google your name. So you need to give out your brand in a very consistent way to make sure that other people are getting a clear impression of who you really are.

CCL: So authenticity is key to personal branding?

Clark: We live in an age of greater and greater transparency. Even if you want to try to be fake, it won't last. You will be discovered.

But more than that, our greatest strength is our authenticity. You want people to work with you because there is something unique about you that makes you valuable. So, if you lead with your authenticity, that gives them a clear reason to choose you.

CCL: Building your brand, shifting your reputation, doesn't happen overnight. But you say some things can change quickly and have immediate impact.

Clark: Sometimes when people think about reinvention, they are intimidated because it seems like a long, hard process. It may be, but there are also elements that can happen in a moment. In the book, I give the example of an executive who learned he had a terrible habit of interrupting people and was seen as rude and haughty. As soon as he got that feedback, he worked to change it. He stopped interrupting all the time, and people began to notice. It shifted people's perceptions almost immediately.

CCL: What are some specific steps to communicate you and your brand?

Clark: Building a strong network is essential. That's the way your brand gets transmitted.

One way to grow your network is the "Wingman Strategy." Find a friend or colleague and make a pact with them. At the next networking event, you talk them up and they talk you up. This takes pressure off of you to self-promote or network with others. By shining the light on each other, more people will be aware of both of you.

Another approach is to "bridge structural holes," to borrow a phrase from the sociologist Ronald Burt. In any organization there are silos. People aren't talking; information isn't shared. You make yourself indispensible if you can be in the center of that. It's actually easy to do. I had a friend who worked at a research hospital — every week she met a different person from a different part of the organization for lunch. Something that simple can make a big difference. When you make it a point to meet new people, you learn more about how the organization works, who to go to for information — and you grow your network really quickly.

CCL: Is there one step or strategy that you absolutely cannot skip or ignore?

Clark: You really have to master your online presence. Any time someone looks you up, the first place they go is Google. You need to take control of what appears. The best way to do that is to create content — on LinkedIn, a blog, a well-curated Twitter feed — then what people see is what you want them to see, not outdated information or what someone else put out there.

CCL: What's the best advice you've been given in your own times of reinvention?

Clark: One thing was very tactical and very useful. Early on in people's reinvention, they sometimes want to

cling to established badges of status as a quick way of appearing to be well-entrenched and credible in their new role. That can be a real mistake.

When I first became a consultant, a lot of people asked about where I was going to have my office. For a lot of people, an office means you're a real professional. But I have worked from home for eight years — which has saved me tens of thousands of dollars.

Instead of focusing on the surface elements — an office or fancy business cards or a high-end credit card — there are new and more important ways to establish yourself. You have to understand what really drives results rather than what is a vanity metric. If you want to reinvent yourself, what you should be spending your time on usually doesn't involve spending a lot of money. It involves gaining expertise and sharing that expertise.

Is It Time for Reinvention?

Dorie Clark, author of Reinventing You, is an advocate of continual learning, but says sometimes you need to kick it up a notch.

Clark, who provided the Premium interview in this month's *Leading Effectively*, says it's time to reinvent yourself professionally if:

- You're at a new phase in life and you want to be known for something different.
- You've been laid off and need to ensure you're in the best position possible to land a new job quickly.
- You want to move up in your company, and you need to take control of your reputation.
- You've been trying to win a promotion, but feel you're being held back by misconceptions about what you're capable of.
- You'd like to move into a different area of your company, perhaps from legal to human resources, or from sales to finance.
- You're just starting out in your career and haven't built up a powerful resume yet, so you need to find another way to stand out.
- You're changing careers and need to make a compelling case that your unusual background is an asset, not a liability.

Learn more at www.dorieclark.com.