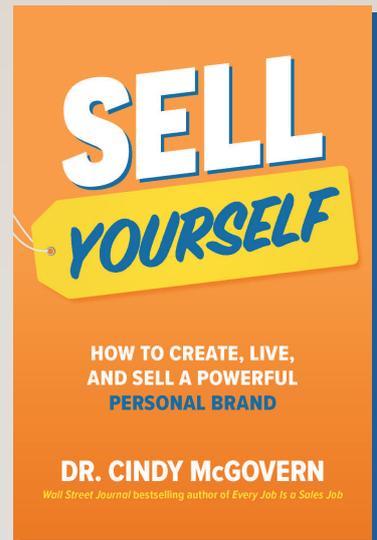


BONUS CHAPTER

Dr. Cindy



**HOW TO SELL YOURSELF IN
THE GIG ECONOMY**

The last time I needed to find a new dog-walker for my precious dog, Biscuit, it occurred to me that people who work by the gig—that is, those who take on one small job at a time on their own without reporting to an employer—might not realize that their success relies on their ability to sell themselves.

I found a selection of qualified pet-sitters on a website where they advertise their services. I especially liked the posts by two of them, so I interviewed them both.

I requested appointments through the website. The first one got back to me right away and suggested several blocks of time when she could meet Biscuit and me to talk about how her services might meet my expectations.

When she met me, she asked a gazillion questions, spent about 10 minutes focused solely on my itty-bitty dog and shared some information about herself with me.

She made an effort to let me get to know her and decide if I could trust her with the care of my favorite non-human. By the time she left, I knew she would be perfect for the job.

The second dog-walker waited a day to respond to me and then asked if we could do the interview over the phone.

I wanted to meet the caretaker in person so I could see how Biscuit reacted to her demeanor with him.

She reluctantly agreed to meet and when she arrived, she told me an Uber was waiting for her outside and she only had a few minutes. Needless to say, I did not hire her.

In fact, I hadn't decided not to until that minute. I wouldn't have insisted on meeting the second dog-walker if I already knew I was going to hire the first. I was open to giving each of them a chance. I wanted to compare them.

I was “shopping” for a new dog-walker, after all. Whenever I shop for anything, I like to compare my options as I decide which one to “buy.”

So it was up to these two gig workers to sell themselves to me. Each of them wanted me to buy what they were both selling—their pet-care services. But only the first one actually sold herself, not just her services, and she is the one I hired.

I've encountered tons of gig workers over the years: ride-share drivers, house cleaners, carpenters, nail techs, hairdressers, landscapers, piano teachers, graphic designers—and the list goes on. By the end of 2023, 78 million people will have joined the gig economy, at least part time, taking on side jobs to bring in a little extra cash, piecing together enough day jobs to create what is being called a “portfolio career” or working temp gigs for companies that need some help during a labor shortage.

The second dog-walker isn't unlike many gig workers I've met: unaware that selling themselves to potential clients is the way to put money in their pockets. The first dog-walker is far less common; she seemed to understand that she needed to sell me on the fact that she was trustworthy, compassionate, into dogs and, especially, into *my* little dog.

By the end of our meeting, I was sold. But that didn't stop the dog-walker from continuing to sell. Whenever she showed up on time, I knew I would hire her again. When she sent me daily selfies featuring herself and Biscuit looking happy on their walk, I knew I would hire her again. When she promptly emailed me a bill for exactly what she had promised she would charge—and not a penny more—I knew I would hire her again. When she noticed that Biscuit was not eating on his normal schedule, she inquired about it, which showed me she was paying attention to him and not just walking him. I was sold.

Whether she was just picking up some extra spending money or making a living feeding and walking pets, that freelancer knew that she was the CEO of her gig and, like the head of any business, she had to consciously sell her services—and herself—if she was to remain employed.

She sold me several things: trust, skill, compassion, love of animals and reliability, for starters. And she used a single sales tool to convince me to sign on with her: a powerful personal brand.

Personal branding



Your personal brand is how you present—or sell—yourself to the world. In the case of the dog-walkers, a personal brand is how they presented themselves to me.

But I didn't buy the services of the second dog-walker. She must not have a personal brand, right?

Wrong.

She probably did not take the time to think about the impression she would make on me or decide which of her qualities she believed would convince me to trust her to care for a pet who is accustomed to getting the royal treatment. She probably did not bother creating a powerful personal brand and most likely believes she really doesn't need one.

But she has one.

It's "too casual, my time is more valuable than yours, dismissive, unconcerned about her client's wishes, not interested in my beautiful dog."

She didn't decide on that brand. I decided for her. And I decided that's a brand I'm not interested in buying.

That's what happens when you don't take the time to create a thoughtful, authentic personal brand for yourself. You leave the branding up to others, who base the brand they assign to you on the impressions you make on them.

Without a consciously crafted personal brand, success can be elusive. If your behavior is more random, decided on in the moment or thoughtless, others will assume that you are, too. Whether you mean to or not, that's what you're selling.

Who's going to buy that?

Whether you're climbing the corporate ladder or picking up by-the-hour gigs here and there, your success depends on the approval of others. You either have to please a manager or supervisor, or you have to satisfy the clients who can hire

you and give you a good review—or not.

The first dog walker sold me a brand of genuine affection for animals and

reliability. She made me feel comfortable entrusting my sick little fella with her when I couldn't be there to care for him myself.

That's a sale.

Quick sale



If you were a professional salesperson with a product or service to sell for your company, your best bet would be to build a relationship with every client in an effort to cultivate a customer for life—one who will buy from your business over and over again. But if you're a gig worker, your sales are more transactional; that is, you might only deal with your customer once and then never again. If you're a ride-share driver, for example, you might literally interact with your riders for 10 or 15 minutes and then never see them again.

Does that mean you don't have to sell them on anything? And if not, does that mean you don't need to bother creating a personal brand to use as a sales tool?

No and no.

An Uber or Lyft driver might not have to win over a customer to get him into her car. Drivers simply accept requests if they're in the area when a rider happens to book a ride on the car service app.

But once a rider is in the car, the driver has a limited time to sell him on rewarding her with five stars and a generous tip. She also might want to sell him on engaging in a pleasant conversation so they both enjoy the trip.

A solid, well-planned personal brand will make those sales more likely.

I use ride-sharing services a lot because I live in a city with limited parking. I typically give five-star ratings and generous tips, but not always.

One who didn't benefit from my generosity was the driver who talked loudly and nonstop on the phone through the whole trip and didn't notice when I tried to get his attention when he made a wrong turn. Another drove me to the airport but didn't even pop the trunk—either time—until I walked to the front of the car to ask for that. One wove through traffic so quickly and carelessly that I asked him to pull over early so I could get out.

I appreciate a driver who says, "Good morning"; who asks me if I would like to listen to music before turning the radio on; and who reads my mood before forcing me into a conversation when I don't feel like talking.

I don't have the option of requesting that driver the next time I call for a ride, but I can choose how much to tip and how many stars to award.

Dr. Cindy's five-step sales process

Like any gig worker, a driver who is a good salesperson will do five things:

1.

Plan a personal brand that will convince riders to tip well and pile on the stars. That personal brand might include qualities like “respectful,” “friendly,” “interesting,” “careful” and “considerate.” That personal brand will reflect the driver’s authentic desire to give every rider a good experience, no matter how long the trip lasts.

That’s a personal brand that will help the driver reach her goals: five stars and a substantial tip.

2.

Look for opportunities to impress the rider. Once, when I requested regular service from Uber, the driver showed up in a shiny black town car, wore a suit and tie, and offered me a bottle of cold water when I settled into the back seat. Another one noticed that I could barely keep my eyes open after a stressful day of traveling and asked if he could play his favorite relaxation track for me.

In both cases, the drivers’ brands included “great customer experience” and “treats riders like they deserve white-glove treatment.” What a nice way to sell me on doing something nice in return.

3.

Establish trust. A driver has very little time to do this—just the length of the trip. As quickly as possible, it’s important to read the room, which, in this case, means to read the passenger’s mood, attitude, demeanor and physical cues. If I’m stressed and tired when I climb into a car, the last thing I want is to listen to music that is loud, aggressive or even unfamiliar. If I feel like chatting, I’d like the driver to be available for a chat—and not engaged in a conversation with someone else blaring over a speaker.

4.

Ask for five stars. I wouldn’t like a driver to come right out and ask me for a big tip. But one driver asked me if she had given me a pleasant experience during my trip with her and I said, “Yes.” Then she asked me if I would be willing to give her a five-star rating. I also said “yes” to that. Ask for what you want and you’re far more likely to get it than if you just hope for it.

5.

Follow up with gratitude. I love it that the driver asked me to evaluate my trip. If I had said I did not enjoy the ride, I think she would have asked me to share my reasons—and then used my feedback to improve her service.

That driver probably will never see me again, but she didn’t treat me like that. She made me feel like she valued my opinion and truly wanted me to have a great experience. She knew she was representing herself and the company (which you can read more about in Chapter 5 of *Sell Yourself: How to Create, Live, and Sell a Powerful Personal Brand*).

Missing pieces



Those five steps: plan, look for opportunities, establish trust, ask for what you want and follow up with gratitude, are key to successful selling.

Yet most gig workers don't follow good sales practices because they don't realize they're selling every time they meet a customer or complete a job. So they don't have a game plan—or a sales plan.

And they don't have a personal brand.

What do you want to be recognized as: rude; self-absorbed; withdrawn; friendly; exceptional; attentive?

Create a personal brand that reflects the part of your personality and the kind of behavior that you believe will help you sell yourself as someone worthy of five stars or of repeat business or of a high-paying gig.

You know how much money you need to make from your gigs in order to pay your rent and save for a vacation. You also should know how to get the most value from each gig, which depends in large

part on how much your clients like you.

Is your brand “likeable?” Does your brand reflect a genuine desire to provide excellent customer service?

If it does, do you remember to roll out those qualities every single time you interact with a customer—or do you sometimes give into your own stress, bad mood, fatigue or dislike of a customer and act in a way that will blow your tip, your chances that the customer will recommend you to friends, or a shot at a second gig with this same client?

Gig workers live in a referral-based world. Your next job very likely will come from someone who heard about you from another client.

So realize that every interaction you have with someone—even off the job—is a potential sale.

Then, realize that your most effective sales tool is a customer-first personal brand that will convince others that you're likeable, trustworthy and capable.

Create. Live. Sell.

In fact, gig workers need to sell constantly. Sure, you want potential clients to hire you for a job. But if you keep selling even after you land the job, those clients will hire you over and over again and refer you to others.

There's no easier sale than the one you make to someone who has already bought from you before.

Consistently presenting yourself in a way that will ensure those repeat sales relies on a solid personal brand that you spend time creating; that you live day in and day out; and that you use to sell yourself to your clients.

It's not enough to decide that your brand is “professional, reliable and friendly.” You have to actually be professional, reliable and friendly—without fail.

Personal branding has three key steps: Create. Live. Sell.

Create.

Decide how you want to present yourself to potential clients, existing customers and anyone who is in a position to recommend you, evaluate your performance or help you find work.

Choose a design for your website and a persona for your social media that showcases your superpowers—qualities and skills that you have that most others do not. Make your branding consistent. If part of your brand is “fun,” your digital footprint should reflect that. If your brand is “professional,” post photos of yourself wearing nice clothes and that reflect your professional demeanor—not the dressed-down, casual, laid back selfies that you snapped during weekends with pals.

Think: Based on what I’m presenting, would I buy this service if I were shopping for a pet sitter/hair stylist/accountant/fitness trainer/proofreader? Your goal is to present yourself to the world in a way that makes the world want you in it.

Then consider:

- How would I like my clients to describe me after I have done a job for them?
- What skills/qualities/personality traits do I have that make me better for this gig than someone else?
- What is my goal for these gigs? Repeat business? Five stars? Generous tips? A great experience for myself and my clients?
- How do I need to present myself during this gig to achieve that goal?

A good example: A friend of mine hired a gentleman to clean the carpets in her home. He had come highly recommended by her neighbor’s housekeeper, and she figured if one cleaning professional is willing to recommend another cleaning professional, the guy must be good.

He showed up on time and ready to work. But imagine my friend’s surprise when she saw that he was dressed in a suit, tie and white gloves! She couldn’t imagine that he would be comfortable wearing those clothes while doing the physical work of cleaning carpets, but he apparently dresses that way every single day.

He wants to make sure everyone knows that carpet cleaning is his profession, and he is a professional through and through. That’s his brand.

His outfit is sort of a gimmick, but the man came through. He took the time to explain his process—he doesn’t use any chemicals and relies on steam to clean the carpets. His service includes cleaning the furniture and throw rugs. He told my friend how long it would take and the price per room. He left the place spotless.

He was barely out the door before my friend was praising him—and posting his phone number—on social media.

And every one of her friends who hired him gave the same report: suit, white gloves, no chemicals, good at explaining, does a great job. Professional through and through.



The carpet cleaner lives his brand. He doesn't just say he's professional, he is professional. My friend doesn't worry that he will do shoddy work the second time, so she plans to hire him every six months. His brand is so clear and he is so committed to it that she knows she'll get A+ service every time she hires him.

Creating a brand that will help you present yourself in a way that will get you to your goals is only the first step of the branding process. The second step is to live that brand—and live up to it. So it's important, as you create your personal brand, to choose one that you can realistically live every day without fail.

Create a brand that is authentically you.

In the gig economy, the last thing you want is for people to believe your brand is “bait and switch.”

An example: When Neala invited her friend group over for a cookout on her newly built backyard patio, her guests were blown away by how beautiful her yard and garden looked compared to what she had before.

One of her friends asked her for the name of the contractor, who had designed a two-tiered patio with a Pennsylvania bluestone floor, a retaining wall made from travertine pavers, and a natural fence fashioned from yellow and green shrubs.

Neala refused to give up the name. The friend, Maureen, wouldn't take “no” for an answer and pressed her pal for the contractor's contact information.

Again, Neala said that as stunning as the end product was, getting there was a painful experience, one that she wouldn't want to put her friend through.

On the recommendation of another friend, Neala had hired Shane, a young, self-employed, multi-talented contractor, to solve a problem she was having with rainwater leaking into her basement.

He was absolutely amazing during their initial interview and the design process.

Shane explained that he would have to dig up part of the backyard to grade it away from the house. As long as he was digging up the yard, Neala asked, could he lay a simple, rectangular patio?

He said he could do better than that, and he sketched out his vision for a mini-oasis at an affordable price.

They shook hands on the spot, and Neala scheduled this unbelievably talented gig worker to start the job two weeks later. He said the work would take about two months to complete.

Then, little by little, the contractor tore his own brand apart.

The job took eight months to complete. Shane showed up sporadically. Sometimes he

worked for only an hour or two and then disappeared for days. When she tried to get him back on track, he argued with her, accused her of asking him to work for less money than he deserved, and once, he called her a “nag.”

She didn’t want to fire him because he was a friend of a friend—and because he clearly had a gift for design and landscaping. So she put up with the disrespect and forfeited a whole summer’s worth of backyard use until he was finished.

Then she vowed to never, ever recommend him to others, no matter how relentlessly they pressed her.

Maureen said she was willing to put up with Shane’s quirks to get a beautiful patio, but Neala wouldn’t budge.

Shane knows he has skill and talent. When he’s on his game, he is charming and friendly.

But that’s not what Neala thinks of him. To her, he’s a disrespectful contractor with a very casual work ethic.

To her, that’s Shane’s personal brand: unreliable, disrespectful, can’t be trusted.

She will never recommend him to her friends—even the pushy ones—and, in fact, warns people not to hire him. So do several of his other past clients.

Shane couldn’t live the brand he presented to Neala during the initial stage of the project. He isn’t reliable; he just says he is. The brand he’s trying to sell is inauthentic.

The brand he’s actually selling is: “Turn and run.”



If you can’t consistently live your brand, you won’t be able to sell it. If you can’t sell your brand, you won’t be able to sell yourself.

“Sell” is the third and final step in the process of establishing a powerful personal brand. And it’s the step that most gig workers either forget about or don’t know about.

But if you’re not going to sell your brand—to use your brand to sell yourself—there’s really no reason to spend time creating it.

So don’t write your brand down and hide it in a drawer. Keep it in your sight and at the top of your mind. Use it as a guide for what you say, how you behave and the way you react in any situation.

Showcase your brand when a potential client is interviewing you for a gig. If your brand is “competent, honest and friendly,” be at your most competent, honest and friendly during that interaction—and after you get the job. Put your “great conversationalist” brand on display while you’re driving a client around and collect a bigger tip and a five-star rating. Show off your “creative and skilled” brand while you’re styling

someone's hair and happily make an appointment for the friend she raved to about you.

Whether you're mowing a yard, babysitting for a neighbor's children or designing a flier for a client, elevate the part of your brand that will convince the client to hire you, to rehire you, to recommend you to others, to pay you more or to give you a perfect rating.

Every time you have the opportunity to get a gig, be a salesperson. Sell yourself as the best person for the job.

Every time you get that gig and start work, be a salesperson. Sell yourself as exactly what you promised you would be.

If you don't sell yourself, you won't be able to support yourself in a gig economy. If you don't brand yourself, it's anyone's guess whether you are the right person for the job.

Every job is a sales job

Too many gig workers do not consider sales to be part of their jobs.

They believe they are drivers, landscapers, illustrators, coaches, writers, massage therapists and caterers.

They are. They are also salespeople.

You might think that your work speaks for itself, but the fact is, most people aren't paying as much attention to that as you think they are or would like them to.

So you have to sell. And as long as you're selling, sell like a pro. You'll keep yourself employed, make more money and enjoy the journey to success if you do.

