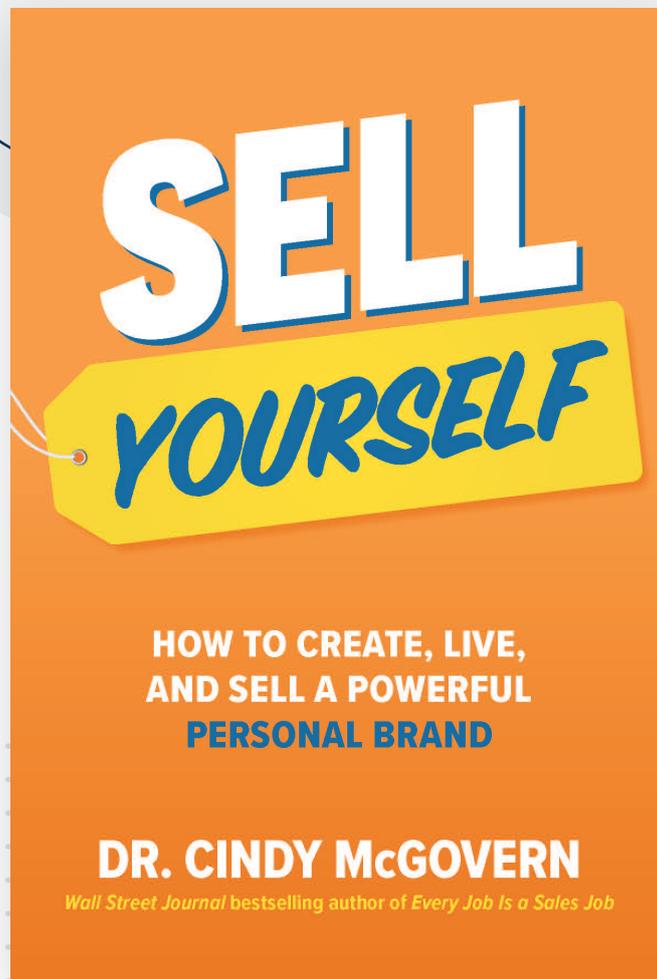


READER DISCUSSION GUIDE



How to Create, Live, and Sell a
Powerful Personal Brand

Most people assume that their personal brands are obvious to everyone they meet. They simply behave and talk to others as they usually do. That's their brand.

In a way, they're correct. Every time you interact with someone else, that person forms an impression of you. That impression, to the other person, is your personal brand.

Here's the rub: How do you know which brand that person has decided to assign to you, based on that impression? And why would you leave it up to the other person to make that decision?

Those who do not give substantial thought to personal branding are, quite literally, allowing others to choose their brands for them. Very often, they're not choosing the brand that you assume they are or that you wish they would.

And if you don't believe you have a personal brand, you're mistaken. Your personal brand is whatever other people think it is.

People who create thoughtful, authentic personal brands take control of the narrative about them that others might be assuming, talking about and considering when they make decisions that affect them, like whether to hire them or pursue a friendship with them or even trust them.

Sell Yourself elaborates on the benefits of personal branding, and it goes two steps further. First, the author makes the irrefutable case that simply creating a personal brand is only one step to having a good one that will help you get what you want and deserve at work and in life. A personal brand is just a thought or list unless you practice it, live up to it and make it who you are, day in and day out. And living your personal brand is the best way to sell it; that is, to use it as a sales tool as you sell yourself as perfect for the job, promotion, relationship or whatever you're going after. The author's personal branding mantra is **Create. Live. Sell.** One without the others will not be as powerful.

Second, *Sell Yourself*, whose author is an expert in sales and communication, teaches readers how to sell in a way that is friendly, consultative and based on relationships. Readers who use their brands as a tool to sell themselves will be most effective if they also use the skills and strategies of the sales professional. In short, *Sell Yourself* teaches readers how to make the most important sale of their lives—when they sell themselves.

Sell Yourself is the unique personal branding book that recognizes the value of branding as a sales tool.



DrCindy



1stladyofsales



Dr Cindy



1stladyofsales

Discussion Questions

Introduction

The author's premise is that even people who have never created a personal brand or believe they don't have one actually do have one. In the introduction, she shares a very personal story about how others created a personal brand for her based on a stereotype rather than on her qualities, capabilities, personality and achievements. That's when she knew she needed to control the narrative about herself and created a brand that showcases her professionalism and intelligence.

- Recall an interaction you have had with another person who made assumptions about you that were untrue. What "brand" did that person assign to you? What brand did you think others were buying about you?
- Do you have a personal brand? What are five words that describe your personal brand?



ACTION ITEM

Ask someone you trust to describe your personal brand in five words. Don't argue, disagree or even respond, except to say, "Thank you." Then, consider how true each of those words is when applied to you. Does your personal brand need an overhaul?

Part 1: CREATE

Chapter 1: Create. Live. Sell.

The chapter begins with a story about Dolly Parton, whom the author admires for her powerful personal brand. Parton is always the same: a confident, talented singer and larger than life with her big hair, big makeup and big personality. The story goes on to reveal that Parton never washes her makeup off of her face before bedtime, just in case an emergency sends her out of her house in the middle of the night. She has said she doesn't want firefighters or witnesses to see her looking like anyone but the Dolly Parton they know and love.

- Name a person—someone you know or a celebrity—who has a powerful brand and lives it consistently. Describe that person’s brand. What about that person/brand do you admire?

Parton didn’t sit down one day and write a brand using words like “sparkly,” “trademark blonde wig” and “over-the-top makeup” and then tuck her list into a drawer out of sight. Instead, she created that brand, and then she proceeded to live that brand every day without fail. This is how she has sold the world on “buying” her as a flashy country star with a look that is as unmistakable as her voice. This has become her trademark.

- What is your trademark? What about you is unmistakable? What do people say you “always” do? What can others count on you for every single time you show up? What do they say you “never” do? It’s OK if it’s positive and it’s OK if it’s negative.



ACTION ITEM

Using as many words as you need, write down exactly what you would like others to say when they describe you to others. It’s OK if it contradicts the list you made for the Action Item for Chapter 1, above.

On Page 10, the author writes, “Living your brand is like keeping a promise to yourself.” She emphasizes the importance of making a commitment to the brand you create for yourself by living it and living up to it consistently, every single day.

- Does this sound difficult? Like a challenge? What about keeping this promise to yourself might be a struggle for you? How do you think you can overcome that struggle?

Chapter 2: Know What You Are Selling

A story about a talented young woman the author calls “Bikini Girl” makes the point that if you try to brand yourself in completely different ways for different audiences, you could confuse both audiences. It’s unlikely that Bikini Girl’s “aspiring model” brand is a secret from the audience for her “aspiring documentary filmmaker” brand. After all, what is really a secret on social media?

- After reading that story, which begins on Page 15, consider: Do you have a split personality brand like Bikini Girl? How could those different brands possibly collide in a way that could cost you opportunities?

This chapter’s main point is that you have to know what you want before you can present yourself to the world in a way that will get you what you want. Others will have a hard time helping you get what you want if you don’t really know what it is.

- What do you want? What are your goals, short term and long term? Which of those goals outshines all of the others as the thing that will make you happy and successful?



ACTION ITEM

Using the checklist on Page 24, write as much as you can in response to each of the five questions. When you get to Question 5, use no more than five words in your answer. This will help you clearly see which direction to take your branding.

Chapter 3: Plan Your Brand

One thing the author comes back to again and again in *Sell Yourself* and in her first book, *Every Job Is a Sales Job*, is that planning is the key to success—in all parts of your life. Creating a personal brand is no exception. You need a plan if you want a powerful personal brand.

- Planning takes time, thought and effort. Do you believe it will be worth your time, thought and effort to create a plan for your personal brand? Is there any part of creating a personal brand that you might consider a waste of time?



ACTION ITEM

Using the Brand Planning Checklist on Page 29, start planning your personal brand. Come up with thoughtful answers to all five questions.

A personal brand isn't what you say you are. It isn't who you want people to think you are. It's who you actually are and who you know you can become. Even if your goal for personal branding is to achieve career goals, your brand, at its core, is about your values. Your brand should reflect your goals, ambitions, qualities, behaviors, skills and values. Without values, a brand cannot be authentic.



ACTION ITEM

Pages 30-32 include a box called "Identify Your Core Values." Do the exercise. It won't take long to complete it but the results very likely will have a profound impact on how well you know yourself and what you should include in your personal brand.

This chapter introduces the concept of “superpowers.” A superpower might be something you do better than everyone else, or a quality, skill or personality trait that is uniquely yours.

- What are your superpowers? Base your answer on the guidance you’ll find in the chapter.

Authenticity is an important component of personal branding. If you choose a brand that is opposite of your personality, skill set or capabilities, you will have a hard time living it day in and day out. You will have a hard time selling yourself to others as something or someone you simply are not.

- Take a look at your answers to the questions you have already answered during your review of this Reader Guide. Did you choose any words or actions that you believe might be hard to live up to? Should you reconsider?

PART 1 IN ACTION: CREATE

Before you move on to Part 2 (Live), take some time to create your personal brand. Using the guidance in Chapters 1-3, write a brand that is thoughtful, authentic and will help you achieve your goals.

Part 2: LIVE

Chapter 4: Live Your Brand

The focus of this chapter is the second part of the Create. Live. Sell. formula for a powerful personal brand: “Live.” Living your brand means sticking with it consistently so others will see that your brand is more than a slogan; it is authentically you.

- How will you stick with your brand when you’re having a bad day or when someone annoys you or when you haven’t had enough sleep?

Living your brand can also be a challenge if you have decided that some of your old habits might hold you back from reaching your goals, or if you need to create new ones that will benefit you. Still, the author acknowledges that it is not always easy to create or eliminate a habit.

- What old habits will you have to leave behind in order to present yourself according to your new brand? Which new ones will you have to practice until they become second nature?

This chapter devotes a section to the five senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste.



ACTION ITEM

Complete the exercise called “How Do Others Perceive You?” on Page 61 to learn the impression you make on the five senses of the people you interact with.

On Pages 62-64, the author offers five practical tips for you as you start to live your brand.

- Which of the five tips resonates most with you?



ACTION ITEM

Create a plan for the first time you will live your brand in public. Where will you be? Who will you try it out on first? What will you wear? Where will you steer the conversation?

Chapter 5: Living Your Company's Brand

This chapter emphasizes the importance of aligning your brand with your employer's.

- Do you know the mission, values, goals and brand of the company you work for?
- Do you agree it is important for employees to guard the reputation of their companies by steering clear of public behavior that might reflect poorly on the boss?



ACTION ITEM

When you get to work tomorrow, ask your manager for a copy of the company's statement of values or mission statement.

If you're a manager, supervisor or business owner, your personal brand especially needs to align with the company's. And your employees should recognize your personal brand as one that includes qualities like leadership, compassion, helpfulness and well-organized.

Pages 81-88 include a list of boss brands that don't always go over well with employees, and that make those leaders less effective than they could be.

- What kind of leader are you (or will you be once you reach your goals)? What will be obvious to your team about your brand?

Chapter 6: Off Brand

In this chapter, the author gives dozens of examples of ways that people go off brand; that is, they either “sell” something they don't intend to with the way they present themselves to the world, or they momentarily step away from their brands and do something they hadn't planned and that could damage their reputations.

On Page 92, the author makes this point: “It only takes one off-brand incident for employers, colleagues, and even some of our friends to question who we are when we do something totally out of character if it is inappropriate.”

- What have you done that was off brand for you? Something that surprised others because it was so out of character?
- Which celebrities have you seen go off brand—and lose everything because of it?

This chapter outlines six steps for salvaging your personal brand if you mess up. One of them is, “Say you're sorry.”

- Is it hard for you to admit it when you have done something you shouldn't have?
Do you think “I'm sorry” can truly salvage the reputation of someone who goes off brand?

Pages 98-110 include a lengthy list of branding blunders, some of which you might recognize in yourself.

- Which branding blunders are you guilty of?



ACTION ITEM

Often we are unaware of the impression we make when we dress, speak, behave or even joke around in a way that we think is perfectly harmless. Ask a trusted friend if you are doing anything to taint your powerful personal brand. What are people saying about you that is unflattering?

Chapter 7 Rebranding

Chapter 7 makes the important point that the personal brand you create, live and sell with so much success today might not be right for you in five or 10 years. Life phases, aging and interests all change you. So your personal brand should change, too.



ACTION ITEM

Review your current personal brand to discover if it needs tweaking. If you have never created a brand, figure out what brand others have assigned to you to learn if it's time to rebrand.

The chapter outlines seven reasons why someone might want or need to rebrand.

- Do you fall into any of those categories? Is it time for you to rebrand?

The author notes that selling a new brand can be more difficult than selling your initial brand. That's because others are used to how you are and either might not want you to change or don't believe you can.

- If you have rebranded, which of the challenges mentioned in the section, "Selling a New Brand" did you encounter? If you are considering a rebrand, how will you face those challenges head on?



PART 2 IN ACTION: LIVE

Before you dig into Part 3, take your new brand (or your newly rebranded self) out for a spin. For one week, stick to your personal brand faithfully. Note what is easy for you and what is difficult. Even if your brand is new, you might need to rebrand a little bit if what you have created doesn't quite work for you as you begin to live it.

Part 3: SELL

Chapter 8: You Already Know How to Sell

In this chapter, the author recognizes that not everybody embraces the idea of selling, even when what you're selling is yourself. The chapter outlines ways that people who do not sell for a living still sell in their business and personal lives.

- What is your impression of the sales profession?
- How do you feel about the notion that when you sell yourself, you're actually making a sale?

The author has coined the term “life sales” to refer to the informal sales all of us make every day when we ask for favors or convince others to change their minds, for example.



ACTION ITEM

Find the exercise on Page 137 called “What Did You Sell Today?” Think of or write in-depth answers to each of the four questions.

The chapter notes that every job is a sales job, even jobs that seem to have nothing to do with sales.

- In what way is your job a sales job?
- Do you believe that every job is a sales job?

Near the end of the chapter, the author notes: “Life sales and unintentional work sales really aren't much different from selling your brand.”

- Do you agree that you can sell yourself and your brand using the same strategies that you use to ask for favors and win a promotion at work?

Chapter 9: Don't Sell Yourself Short

One of the biggest branding mistakes, according to the chapter, is selling yourself short. This happens when you create a brand that limits you or stereotypes you, for instance.



ACTION ITEM

Using the list on Pages 147-169, identify any pitfalls in your brand that might sell you short.

One of the author's mantras is: “Nobody does this life alone.”

- How can you enlist friends, colleagues and others in your effort to make your personal brand a success? Name names.

A personal brand can fail if you are too humble to use it to sell yourself, your talents and your superpowers.

- What is your reaction to Dr. Stephen Thomas, who explained his brand of “gracious self promotion” as described on Page 162?
- Do you equate promoting your best self through a powerful personal brand with boasting?



ACTION ITEM

Make a plan for how you will use your personal brand to sell yourself on and off the job. Include possible statements you can make. Anticipate challenges you will have to overcome and how you will stay on brand when you face them.

Chapter 10. Sell like a pro

In this chapter, the author outlines her five-step process for selling in a way that benefits both the buyer and the seller. The premise is: As long as you're selling yourself, you might as well sell like a pro.

- How comfortable are you with selling now that you have a process that creates a win-win for seller and buyer?

The most difficult step for most people is **Step 4: Ask for What You Want**, according to the author.

- Why do you think it's so hard to ask for what you want?
- What is the best experience and what is the worst experience you ever had when you asked for something you really wanted and believed you deserved?



ACTION ITEM

Make a list of the things you want, and plan for how you will ask for them. Include who you should ask, when the best time to ask might be, and what you will say during the conversation.

Not everyone says “yes” when you try to sell them on buying you as a perfect fit for a job, relationship or opportunity. But feeling and acting grateful, no matter what the outcome, can set you up for future sales.

- How have you reacted in the past when someone said “no” to something you asked for?
- Now that you have read *Sell Yourself*, how will your reaction change the next time you hear “no”?
- What did you learn about selling in Chapter 10 that surprised you?

Chapter 11: Sell All of You

The chapter introduces the concept of “multifaceted” branding; that is, people are multifaceted and their brands should be, too. While a personal brand focuses on a few core facets of your personality, depending on what your goals are, that doesn’t mean there’s not much, much more to you.

- Which of your many facets do you elevate most often at work?
- Which of your many facets do you elevate most often with family and friends?



ACTION ITEM

Make a list of every facet of your personality, character, lifestyle and behavior that you can think of. Which ones serve you the best as you work toward your career goals? Which ones do you think you should keep private and away from your brand?

Your personal brand isn’t just for in-person interactions, the chapter notes. Social media is a place where a personal brand can shine—or not.

- How is the brand you present in person different from the one you present online? How is it the same?

The author admits there are parts of her private life that she keeps private and away from her brand.



ACTION ITEM

Decide which facets of your brand qualify as private. Decide how you will make sure you do not reveal those facets so you do not sell the wrong thing.

- Are you an open book? Or are some parts of you better left unspoken and not posted?

PART 3 IN ACTION: SELL

Now that you have learned how to create, live and sell your personal brand, do it. Create a thoughtful, authentic brand. For one week, live it every day, with no exceptions. Look for opportunities all week to use your brand to sell yourself to the people who can help you get what you want, need and deserve.

Epilogue: Leaving a Legacy



ACTION ITEM

Write the speech you would like someone to make at your retirement party, whether that's in a few months or decades from now. What is the legacy you would like to leave?