

BONUS CHAPTER

PERSONAL BRANDING FOR YOUR SECOND ACT



SELL

YOURSELF

HOW TO CREATE, LIVE,
AND SELL A POWERFUL
PERSONAL BRAND

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You've spent years—perhaps even decades—perfecting your craft, rising in your chosen field and cultivating a professional reputation that you can be proud of. Now, you want to do something else. Something new. Something different. Perhaps nothing at all.

This might be outside of your comfort zone.

You most likely created a powerful personal brand at some point during your career. Even if you didn't consciously create a brand, your reputation, style, attitude and achievements became the brand others know you for today.

But the powerful personal brand that helped you solidify your reputation and make a success of your career and life so far probably isn't going to get you where you want to go next.

Whether you're retiring after a satisfying career, stepping away from a position that you stayed at for too long even though it never fulfilled you, venturing back into the workplace after years as a stay-at-home parent, or leaving a long-term relationship, it's time to rebrand.

It's time for a new brand, a brand for your second act.

I'm not talking about a simple job switch—a promotion at work or a move to a competitor. I'm not talking about taking your considerable talent and skills out of the rat race and into the gig economy, where you can be your own boss and perhaps even compete with your former employer.

I'm talking about a wholesale change in your life, something most of us do at some point. I did it when I ditched my lifelong dream for a career as a college professor after teaching for several years and then moving into a consulting and sales role. Most people do it when they hit 50, 55, 60, 65, 70—and retire from what they've been doing for decades. Some do it when they achieve a level of financial independence that allows them to quit their 9-to-5 lifestyle and pursue a dream or turn a hobby into a business.

I'm talking about your second act. I'm talking about what you're going to do for the rest of your life or at least for this next phase of life that is different—maybe totally different—from what you've been doing up until now. I'm talking about a change so significant that if you leave it to chance, you could squander the opportunity.

My view: As you embark on whatever is next for you, you will want to create a personal brand to help you establish a new reputation as perfect for moving forward as the one you're leaving behind.

Start fresh.

No matter where you came from or where you hope to go, this new journey starts with a plan, and not just a financial plan. As you embark on your second act, plan for everything, from how you will spend your time, to how you will contribute, to what you would like to get out of it, to how you would like to feel, to how you will make your dreams come true.

Just about every success in life starts with a plan.

Although your journey starts with a solid plan, your plan starts at the end.

To help you see the future, let's explore the most basic questions: Who, what, where, when, why and how?

Who do you want to become? When others describe you a year from now, what words would you like them to use? What kind of reputation do you want to establish for your second act? How is that different from the reputation you so honorably cultivated in your first act? Which of your qualities, talents and personality traits will your second-act personal brand encompass?

Examples: full-time grandparent; consultant/adviser; world traveler; golf fanatic; super volunteer; happy homebody; small business entrepreneur; hobbyist; someone who indulges a passion.

What do you hope to accomplish? What are your goals for your new life? A year from now, what do you hope to see when you look back to today? What is your mission?

Examples: finish my education; earn a degree in something unrelated to work; become a social media influencer; devote time to community; remodel the family home; spend substantially more time with friends and relatives; use my first-act expertise to advocate for a worthy cause; become a yogi.

Where do you want to go? Figuratively, that means: What direction are you moving toward? Literally, it means: Where do you want to spend your time? Where would you like to relocate to or travel to?

Examples: move to the beach or mountains; live in another country; take a series of cruises; relocate closer to children and grandchildren; downsize to a more manageable home; change focus from work to personal enrichment.

When will your second act begin? If you believe that planning is the blueprint for any success, make a solid plan before you make a move. Plan for your retirement years before you retire. Plan for your new business venture before you quit your full-time job. Know where you will live and what you will do there before you sell your house. A lot of people scale back their first-act jobs or activities before they fully embrace the second act.

Examples: after I land two major clients for my new consulting business; if I win the lottery; after scaling back to part-time work for a year; on my 65th birthday; when my spouse retires; once I'm vested in my employer's retirement plan.

Why are you doing this? And why now? Why are you changing your lifestyle? Why are you stopping whatever it is you're stepping back from? Why are you retiring at this specific time?

Examples: I've accomplished all of my first-act goals; I've lost interest in the very thing that used to set my soul on fire; I want to devote my energy to a personal or charitable pursuit; I feel I'm running out of energy; I'm being pushed out; I'm just plain tired; there's something I have always wanted to do and it's just time.

How will you make it happen? How realistic are your goals? Do you have enough money for your second act? Do you have the education and expertise you need to pull it off? Do you have the support of others?

Examples: I will take classes or even get an internship to bolster my qualifications for what's next; I will create an environment in my home or move to a perfect place to enjoy my second act;; I will devise a plan with my financial adviser to help pay for my new life; I will partner with a like-minded friend or family member for a new venture.

The next step in the planning process is to take inventory of your interests, strengths and challenges. What superpowers do you possess that will help you get where you want to go; that is, what unique skills do you have or what can you do that's better than almost anyone else?

As you take inventory, start a sort of "trash" pile where you can mentally file any tasks, activities, people or commitments that you do not want to carry over from your first act to your second. Don't feel bad about it; your second act, unlike the first, is all about you!

And consider what you might have to sacrifice to follow your new path. Will you lose touch with good friends if you move? Will you give up the space you had in your family home if you downsize to a one-story rambler in an age-restricted community?

Now you know your goals, you know how to qualify yourself to meet them and you know what you have to offer.

This becomes the basis of your second-act personal brand.

Personal branding for your second act

Recall your 18- or 22-year-old self, eager to get started on building a life, career and family. Exciting but scary stuff.

Even with classes and part-time jobs under your belt, you had to convince others that you had the skill, talent, capability and personality to be successful in the job, relationship or pursuit you made as your goal. Remember how hard that was at times? Remember how people dismissed you because of your youth and branded you based on your youthful mistakes?

Here's some good news and some bad news.

First, the good news. Even if your experience and expertise are not a perfect fit for

the roles that will help make your second-act dreams come true, you've still got tons of experience and expertise.

Few jobs pigeonhole you into a single skill set. If you spent your career as a mail room manager, for example, you learned way more than how to sort mail. You learned how to supervise people, how to work on a team, how to set goals and priorities, how to meet deadlines, how to train younger co-workers, how to leverage your passion for baseball into lifelong friendships—and on and on. If your second-act goal is to coach Little League baseball, who is better qualified? If you worked for decades as a nurse, you can easily translate your compassion and skills in organization, scheduling, crisis management and medicine into a successful second act at the helm of your community's animal rescue effort.

Often, the wisdom we accumulate throughout a life—both on the job and off—is more valuable than a specific degree or knowledge base.

The bad news: This is exciting—but scary—stuff, just like when you were decades younger.

And just as some people dismissed you because of your youth back then, others will doubt you because you are older than they are.

Don't let that sway you from your goals. Your secret weapon: your second-act personal brand.

Whether you are branding for the first time or rebranding as you make a major life change, the steps are largely the same: **1. Create. 2. Live. 2. Sell.**

Create.

Using what you learned about yourself and your second-act goals from the prior section, create a personal brand that showcases your best self in a way that will convince other people that you are perfect for the role you want to fill or the goal you want to achieve.

Ditch whatever your first-act personal brand included that you don't want to carry over. For example, if your brand included “professional, always the last one to leave the office, dressed up, stressed out,” you might want to tweak it to “casual, committed, well-balanced, puts family and community first, reliable and relaxed.” Your new brand might include “golfs every day, cooks for friends, entertaining, fun, keeps up with the news, can talk about anything.”

Borrow what you need from your first-act personal brand, but don't duplicate it. Focus your brand on how you want to present yourself to others now, not how you presented yourself in the past. How do you want them to describe you now and going forward, regardless of how they thought of you during Act 1?

Live.

Creating a second-act personal brand won't be a good use of your time unless you live that brand every day. If your second act takes you far away from the 9-5 rat race, you might feel less pressure to live up to your new brand. But consider this: Unless you relocate, everyone you know will continue to see you as the person you were for so many years. Unless you consistently live your new brand, it will be hard to convince others that your focus, priorities, intentions, goals and lifestyle have changed.

Sure, you're still the same person. But a person changes a lot during a big life change. Moving from "all business" to "business casual" is a big brand change. So leave the tie at home when you meet pals for lunch or dinner. Embrace your time on the golf course, on mountain hikes, on day trips and on doing whatever you engage in now that you didn't have time for before. Steer the conversation away from talk of the industry you have just left. Make your interactions with others fun and not so much functional.

Sell.

Some people just aren't going to buy the new you. They're not going to buy it that you're just as happy raising children full time as you were bossing around the traders at your old Wall Street office. Your old gang might even take bets behind your back about how long you'll be satisfied devoting your time to passions like helping baby sea turtles find their way into the ocean when all of your work friends are still grinding away at solving work problems day in and day out.

You'll have to sell them. The easiest way to do that is to consistently live your brand every day. Live your new brand when you meet someone new and live it when you interact with former colleagues and first-act friends. Be who you want to be now, not who you were then.

Eventually, they'll get it. Eventually, they will begin to think of you in the new way that you think of yourself. To them, you eventually won't just be a former employee, professional or expert. You'll be exactly how you want to be now that you've left that all behind. You will be who you show to the world.

How to sell

You did a stellar job of selling your first-act brand and you'll excel at selling your second-act brand, too.

The best way to sell is to borrow strategies from sales professionals. Here is the best strategy, in a nutshell. It has five parts:

1. Plan

You already planned your new brand. Now make a plan to sell it. A few tips:

- Ask friends, significant others, family and former colleagues to reinforce your new brand by talking about you in the new way that you would like others to experience you. Ask them to introduce you as “my friend Mary. She’s just wrote a book” instead of “my old co-worker Mary. She was a top seller at our company for 20 years.” Ask them to bring up your new accomplishments in conversations with others, not your past successes. For example, they could say, “You should see Roberto’s yard. It turns out he’s got a green thumb that we never knew about” instead of, “I really miss seeing Roberto around the shop.”
- Refer to yourself as having your new role, not your old one. If someone asks you what you do, say, “I play golf five times a week and I’m an amateur chef,” not “I’m retired” or “I used to work for Acme Corp.”
- Present yourself consistently according to your new brand. Instead of meeting former co-workers at the steakhouse around the corner from the office, invite them over for a backyard barbecue. Invite them into your new world so they can see it’s different, it suits you and you’re not “out to pasture.”
- Avoid complaining about your new lifestyle. Sure, you’ll have to get used to it. Leaving something important behind is always hard, as you’ll read later in this chapter. You might even grieve a bit over the loss of a routine that had become so familiar. But you’ll sell your second-act brand much more convincingly if others can see that you know you made the right choice.

2. Look for opportunities

Keep your ears and eyes open for opportunities to sell your new brand. A few examples:

- If your second-act brand indulges your passion for gardening, invite friends, family and former co-workers over to see what you've done with your patio and lawn. Show off what you've learned about native plants and how to attract hummingbirds. Your joy will convince them that you truly have traded in your old life.
- Correct others when they refer to you as a co-worker or pigeonhole you into your old role in conversations with you or with others. Interject, "Here's what I'm working on now." Try to interest the people you like and love in what interests you now.
- Volunteer for projects in your neighborhood and at your church that showcase the skills, hobbies and interests you are focusing on for your second act. One neighbor I know spent his career as a remodeling contractor. When he retired, he asked to be appointed to a city committee that advises new residents who are building homes in older neighborhoods. His new brand: "civic leader, involved in the community, helpful to neighbors." He really never had time for that before.

3. Establish trust



Some people might be suspect of your new brand. If you're stretching into territory that's new for you, for example, they might doubt that you are qualified, even though you excelled in another field for many years. If you've been out of the workforce for years raising a family and running a home, they might not think you're cut out for a corporate, retail or hospitality job. Some ideas that might turn them into believers:

- Figure out what you know or what skills you have that can help the other person solve a problem or fill a need. The best "sales" are the ones that get you what you want—a new role, respect, believability—and also get the other person what he or she wants. I have a friend who quit her longtime job as a physical therapist to try to earn money as a social media influencer. Even her closest friends advised her that she was out of her element. But she proved them wrong when she wisely targeted an audience of people who appreciated her advice about how to dress fashionably despite the need for an orthopedic boot, an arm sling, a back brace or another device; how to camouflage scars with makeup; and how to cover radiation-induced thinning hair with wigs styled to look natural.
- Read the room. Sometimes you simply will have to defend your choices. Adult children often fear that a retired parent who is indulging a second-act passion is wasting money, taking risks or making a fool of himself. Or they think retired parents should take it easy rather than join a softball team, travel extensively, build an addition on their home or sign up for ballroom dancing lessons. Stay confident and in control of your choices: A brand that is forced on you is not a brand that will help you succeed, make you happy or be easy to consistently live.

- Do what you promise. A friend who quit a high-paying job at a publishing company to work full time finishing the novel she had started years earlier met resistance from her husband, mother and friends, who said she was crazy for giving up her income to chase her dream. She gained their trust and support when she treated her writing as a full-time job, setting up a home office, keeping an early morning schedule and regularly producing pages. When she landed a contract with a literary agent, she let everyone know.

4. Ask for what you want



Do you need help getting the word out that you are available to help homeowners with interior design—a passion you have decided to indulge now that you no longer have to work full time? Ask friends, family, former co-workers and neighbors to post about it on social media. A universal rule is: If you don't ask for what you want, chances are good that you won't get it. You up your chances exponentially when you ask.

5. Follow up with gratitude



Whenever someone says “yes” to what you’ve asked for, say, “Thank you.” Whenever someone says “no,” say, “Thank you.” You never know when someone’s circumstances will change and that answer will change. Here are three ways to show your gratitude to those who help you get established in your second act:

- Make good on your promises. When people help or support you because your second-act brand convinced them that you are qualified, reliable or capable of filling a need for them, prove that you are. Do what you said you would do. Make them happy to have recommended you, hired you, joined your book club or helped you plan the neighborhood block party.
- Return the favor. Maybe a friend thought of you to fill out a foursome when a golf buddy moved away—and it was just what you needed to get your new life started. Recommend that friend for a spot on a committee he wants to serve on or send business his way. If a neighbor helped you set up the computer in your home office so you could start indulging your passion for genealogy, repay the favor by researching her family’s crest and framing a print of it as a gift. Make “grateful” a core part of your second-act brand, no matter what else it includes.
- If your second act allows you to stop working full time, embrace the opportunity to spend more time being helpful with family, friends, neighbors, your community, your church and even strangers. A second-act brand that includes “helpful” is one that will establish you as kind and grateful, a good neighbor and a valuable friend. No matter

what you want for your second act, those qualities—if they are authentically yours—will go a long way toward getting you what you want and need.

Transitions

I coached a woman who is a former police chief. She's tough as nails, strong, commanding and the first to describe herself as a "badass."

She put in her 20 and retired with a nice pension, but she's only 50, so she decided to rebrand for her second act. I started taking her through the who, what, where, when, why, how of rebranding, and she surprised me. When I asked her who she wants to be, she replied with: "I don't even know who I am."

She identifies as a cop. She was ready for a new challenge but now that she has left a job that she loved, she's struggling with who she is without a gun, badge, paycheck and position of authority.

She wonders if she is enough.

The former chief is grieving the life she had. She's convinced retiring was the right thing for her to do, but she has to deal with her grief in order to make way for the life she wants from now on.

Grief is a real emotion for people who retire from long-time careers, especially if they loved the work. The chief can easily get another job in the private sector making way more money than she did before, but she needs to let go of her past before she can move on.

Here are 10 things to be aware of as you make your curtain call at the end of your first act:

1. Quitter's remorse. Like the chief, many retirees wonder if they should have stayed a little longer. Instead of celebrating the lives they touched, the good they did and the time they spent well, they second-guess their decision to quit and wonder if they will ever find fulfillment in retirement.

 **Tip:** Take some time to celebrate your accomplishments. Recount the impact you had on others. Applaud yourself for a job well done and a life well spent to this point. Consider this an intermission, not a final curtain call. Your second-act brand: "accomplished and ready for the next adventure."

2. Leave a legacy. The flip side of leaving a job too early is leaving too late. Consider the athletes who hang on for one more season and then another and another when they're well past their prime. They lose speed, star power and reputation when they can't seem to hang it up. Their brand, which once was

“unbeatable” or “superstar,” becomes “washed up.” That’s not a great legacy.

☑ **Tip:** You might not want to quit or retire at the height of your success, but recognize when you are losing effectiveness, respect or status. Consider the legacy you want to leave at the end of your career. Your second-act brand: “still on top.”

3. Plan to stay busy. Sure, you might want to turn into a couch potato for a few weeks after a long career or too much time spent in a difficult job. But don’t get stuck on that couch. If you decide you’ve had enough of the rat race, find a way to contribute to society with your extra time. The stepdad of one of my friends started volunteering at a hospital after he retired. He visits with patients and wheels them to and from the X-ray rooms. He loves having a schedule and meeting new people every day. He says it keeps him young.

☑ **Tip:** Treat your volunteer work—or even your daily golf game—like a job. Get up early, wear clothes that look nice on you and stay on schedule so you don’t fall into a trap of sleeping too much and spending all day alone. Your second-act brand: “honors commitments; proud volunteer.”

4. Have fun. A friend told me about her neighbor who had worked as a marketing professional for a big hotel chain from age 21 to age 55, when she took a buyout and retired early. Bored and missing her paycheck, she decided to find something else to do a few days a week. She loves wine, so she got a job pouring flights for tourists at a local winery. She had a blast. One of the customers she met was a young man who was starting up a training company and needed marketing advice. She wound up working for him full time as a mentor for the staff and a marketing consultant.

☑ **Tip:** Take an inventory of what brings you joy and then do that. Your second-act job doesn’t have to be related in any way to the career you are leaving.

5. Be bold. Don’t let anyone talk you out of following your passion, volunteering instead of working for pay or trying new things. Defend your choices and your right to make them—even to well-meaning family.

☑ **Tip:** Your second act is a chance to reinvent yourself, to have some fun and to indulge your passions. You deserve it!

