**Now Is the Time to Hone Your Personal Brand**

A few weeks ago, which now seems like a faint memory from a former life, when the quaint practice of conducting classes in classrooms was still in vogue, a I was talking to my students about some of my favorite techniques for one-on-one, in-depth interviews. One of those is to start interviews with the very broad, open-ended question, “Tell me about yourself.”

Most of this class would be graduating in May, so it was not surprising that one of the students quickly pivoted the conversation to the topic of finding a job. She asked, “What would you answer if someone asked you that question?”

Of course, the professorial thing to do was to turn it around on her. “I don’t know, what would you say?” She was clueless as to where to start and what to focus on, as were most of the others in class.

But I did answer and it was easy, because I understand my personal brand for better and worse. My immediate response would be that I’m a very curious person with a passion for learning about what makes people tick. From there, I could tell a story about how my curiosity and willingness to push beyond the expected resulted in both commercial and personal success. If I were to talk about any specific skill set or technical know-how, it would only serve as support for my overall brand position and personality as a high-touch creative guru and right brain thinker.

It’s critical to remember the words of Maya Angelou, who once famously said, “I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

How do you make others feel? Doing a “great job” is meaningless if your management, clients or customers don’t feel great about working with you. This is one of the key challenges of personal branding. It’s as much about how you go about doing your work than the work itself. And this all starts with the solid foundation of a strong, proprietary personal brand.

As we hunker down for the next few weeks or months, stressing about the uncertainty that faces us all will not be productive. There’s so much that’s out of our control that it’s easy to let our minds spiral downward and out of control.

True, there are layoffs and financial difficulties ahead for many of us with no short-term fixes in sight. But you can take control of the future by working on your personal brand. Understanding who you are and developing the ability to articulate what you stand for will ease the way to write better cover letters, nail interviews or even start that business you’ve always dreamed of.

I’d be delighted to help. If you’d like to talk about the benefits of developing your own unique, personal brand, I’d love to hear from you.