

: How do we differentiate ourselves?



By [John Gatherer](#)

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Today's work environment has become extremely demanding and competitive and can be broadly characterised as driven by performance and results.

Organisations have implemented comprehensive strategies, frameworks, processes and tools that seek to identify resource, develop, retain and review their talent across the structures. The people who are noticed and considered for future investment are those that consistently meet their performance requirements, display initiative and potential and demonstrate a high degree of engagement.

It is also important to handle the dynamics of working in different teams and projects and being able to manage the complexities of team roles, diversity, leadership, collaboration and group interactions.

Teamwork and its relationship to results are best displayed in the world of sport where competitors compete for sometimes very large rewards. There will always be others ahead of you, beside you and behind you focusing on finishing the race before you. This is mirrored in the workplace as employees compete for key positions and are continuously being assessed and compared by the decision makers in the hierarchy. Again, the 'whole person' concept is paramount as you work your way up to critical leadership appointments - and remember, as you go higher up the organisational structures, "the neck of the bottle is only so narrow!"

You are accountable for how you compete and the results that you achieve are totally in your control. So if you are not satisfied with where you are in life, or want to change your outcomes or shift your status - it has to start with you.

We spend a great deal of time interacting with others and noticing their expressions, behaviours, quirks and personality traits. Do we spend the same amount of time and effort observing ourselves and notice how we are perceived by the people around us? We need to develop a clear profile of our strengths, positive attributes, preferences, competencies and interests so that we can leverage them and stand out and be different.

This distinctiveness and unique flair is called your personal brand. Think about the following quotation from Tom Peters: 'Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You.'

The majority of us actually promote ourselves extremely poorly as we believe it's uncool or self-centred. We also do not really have a plan and are typically modest and self-conscious about marketing ourselves to others.

Building personal brand

Personal brand building is critically important in career management. If you are not doing it, your competitors are! In order to build your personal brand, you need to be regularly exploring the following questions:

- How can I sell myself?
- How authentic do people see me?
- What is it that I have to sell?
- How do others judge my character?
- What real promise do I have?
- How visible am I in the eyes of people that matter?
- How do I adapt to change and re-invent myself over time?

But you also definitely need to be noticed! You need to build a track record of consistently delivering the goods - but also impress others by demonstrating your passion, enthusiasm, drive, integrity, values and ideas.

One of the international guru's in this area is best-selling author, Marcus Buckingham. He promotes the idea that people will get the best results by making the most of their STRENGTHS rather than by putting too much emphasis on weaknesses or perceived deficiencies. He has published bestsellers such as "First, Break All the Rules" and "Now, Discover Your Strengths." His latest book is called "Standout: The Ground breaking new strengths assessment from the leader of the strengths revolution." Find out what your strengths are and make it your mission to find roles that optimise them allowing you to stand out from the crowd.

ABOUT JOHN GATHERER

John has co-authored the best-selling book, "I am Talent", focusing on developing individuals' potential, self-mastery and career aspirations, has written numerous articles and presented at conferences, locally and internationally.

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