

Chapter Four

Crafting Your Personal and Professional Brand

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Crafting Your Personal and Professional Brand

Introduction

A brand is the expectation, image, and perceptions it creates in the minds of others, when they see or hear a name, product or logo. According to Randall Hansen (2007) *“Branding can be defined as a promise... a promise of the value of the product... a promise that the product is better than all the competing products... a promise that must be delivered to be successful”*. For example, Volvo is differentiated from other car companies by its promise of safety and security and IBM stands for dependability. Branding isn't just for corporations anymore. There is a new trend called *“Personal Branding”*. The reason for this is (Jane Tabachnick, 2007):

1. The technological revolution has changed the structure of careers today. It used to be that you went to work for one or two companies in your entire career. Today we will all have as many as four to eight jobs or careers in our lifetime. Personal Branding is essential to career development and an effective career tool because it helps define who you are, what you stand for, what makes you unique, special, and different, how you are great, and why you should be sought out.
2. The change in the way we communicate. The Internet has elevated each of us to the position of publisher. Email, newsgroups, bulletin boards, blogs, and online network and discussion groups afford all of us the opportunity to learn, network and get exposure for our businesses and ourselves. People want to do business with people they know or people they feel they can trust, with whom they feel some sort of connection, and with whom they relate. If you are a familiar, friendly, and consistent presence and brand online, people will have the sense that they know you and be more receptive to doing business with you. So Personal Branding is also essential to business development.

Being good and accomplished in your field is not enough. It's time to give serious effort to discovering your genius, passion, and your authentic dream, imagining and developing yourself as a powerful, consistent, and memorable person with your own specific brand, as you do related work you love. You can shape the market perception of your Personal Brand by defining your unique strengths, values, and personality, sharing it with others in an exciting, persuasive manner, and cultivating your brand continuously. It's something that you can develop and manage, which is essential for future employability and success in life. Everyone has a chance and should take the responsibility to learn, improve, build up their skills and be a strong brand.

There is no job security. Be independent and (re)define yourself by building, implementing and cultivating your authentic personal brand. Become a powerful brand as you attract and create new opportunities. According to Peter Montoya (2005), there are three categories of business that need personal branding:

1. Independent service professionals (actors, agents, artists, athletes, authors, advisors, consultants, designers, dentists, caterers, chiropractors, real estate professionals, etc.
2. Personal service business (owners of gyms, auto shops, cleaners, bakeries, computer repair shops, print shops, child care, painters, gardeners, etc.
3. Value-adding product sellers (auto dealers, bookstores, publishers, record stores, specialty retail, and so on. They need a personal brand in order to influence key people in their domain.

Everyone has a personal brand but most people are not aware of this and do not manage this strategically and effectively. You should take control of your brand and the message it sends and affect how others perceive you. This will help you to actively grow and distinguish yourself as an exceptional professional. Having a strong personal brand has benefits as it stimulates meaningful perceptions about the values and qualities that you stand for, and tells others: who you are, what you do, what makes you different, how you create value for them, and what they can expect when they deal with you. Additionally, it:

1. Influences how others perceive you.
2. Creates expectations in the mind of others of what they will get when they work with you.
3. Creates an identity around you which makes it easier for people to remember who you are.
4. Gets your prospects to see you as the only solution to their problem.
5. Puts you above the competition and makes you unique and better than your competitors in the marketplace.

Your personal brand is the synthesis of all the expectations, images, and perceptions it creates in the minds of others, when they see or hear your name. The underlying assumption of personal branding philosophy is that each of us has unique gifts and a distinct purpose and dream in life. By connecting these gifts, purpose and dream, we open ourselves up to greater happiness and success in life (Frost, 2003). Building your brand is clearly a life management enhancement function.

This new blueprint will help you to unlock your potential and build a trusted image of yourself that you want to project in everything you do. It must therefore be in harmony with your true values, beliefs, dreams, and genius. When your brand is combined with powerful tools, it will deliver peak performance and create a stable basis for trustworthiness, credibility, and personal charisma. This inside-out approach is durable, it differs from traditional methods and it is based on a passion for developing human potential. This new approach places more emphasis on understanding yourself and the needs of others. Meeting others' needs while staying true to your personal values, holistically improving yourself continuously, and realizing your personal growth will be outcomes of your new personal branding journey. This approach focuses on the human side of branding, and includes your reputation, character and personality. If you are well branded according to this approach, you will find it easier to convince others and will attract the people and opportunities that are a perfect fit for you.

The authentic personal branding process starts with determining who you are at your core authentic self. Rather than inventing a brand that you would like to be perceived as and to sell yourself to others, this one is based on your life philosophy, dreams, vision, mission, values, key roles, identity, self-knowledge, self-awareness, self-responsibility, positive attributes, and self-management. With an authentic personal brand, your strongest characteristics, attributes, and values can separate you from the crowd. Without this, you look just like everyone else. If you are not branded in an authentic, honest, and holistic way, if you don't deliver according to your brand promise, and if you focus mainly on selling, packaging, outward appearances, promoting yourself, and becoming famous, you will likely be perceived as inauthentic.

Learning Objectives

After learning this authentic branding methodology and applying its concepts, some of the many things you may learn to do are:

1. Build, implement, and cultivate an authentic, distinctive, inspiring, compelling, enduring personal brand.
2. Create positive perceptions and emotions in the mind of your prospects (that you are different, special, unique, and authentic) based on your personal brand.
3. Build a truly lasting and trusted relationship with your clients, make an emotional connection with them, and managing their expectations and perception effectively.
4. Manage and influence how others perceive you and think of you.
5. Stimulate meaningful perceptions about the values and qualities for which you stand.
6. Use your brand to communicate your unique service that provides a sense of value for your target audience, which is in line with your dreams, purpose in life, values, passion, competencies, uniqueness, genius, specialization, characteristics, and things that you love doing.
7. Position yourself strongly in relation to your competitors, built a strong reputation, and develop an effective image of yourself that you want to project in everything you do.
8. Communicate what you stand for in a unique way that is different from others in your field and that gets inside people's mind.
9. Provide value to others continuously, create visibility, build trust, and reinforce integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, credibility, transparency, and personal charisma.
10. Build a trusted image of yourself, which is based on your true values, beliefs, dream, and genius.
11. Make a difference in relationships throughout your life, find your passion, separate you from the crowd, be happy and attract success.

12. Differentiate yourself, set you apart from others, become authentic, and create an identity around yourself which makes it easier for people to remember who you are.
13. Enhance your brand equity and brand awareness.
14. Become known as a thriving and distinguished professional.
15. Eliminate the competition and make you unique and better than all your competition in the marketplace.
16. Manage yourself effectively as a business, develop self-esteem, unlock your potential, and enrich your relationships with others
17. Increase your personal effectiveness and deliver peak performance.
18. Align personal branding with corporate branding and get the optimal fit and balance between these two activities in order to enhance labor productivity, to create a climate of trust, and to stimulate employee engagement.
19. Become an effective authentic personal brand coach.

A great brand taps into emotions ...Emotions drive most, if not all, of our decisions. A brand reaches out with a powerful connecting experience. It's an emotional connecting point that transcends the product. A great brand is a story that's never completely told. A brand is a metaphorical story that's evolving all the time. Stories create the emotional context people need to locate themselves in a larger experience.
 -- Scott Bedbury

Hubert Rampersad's Authentic Branding Model

This section emphasizes Hubert Rampersad's organic, holistic and authentic branding model, which provides an excellent framework and roadmap to develop, implement, and cultivate an authentic personal and corporate brand in a sustainable manner. The Authentic Branding Model (Figure 4-1) consists of four phases which are the building blocks of sustainable personal and professional leadership branding.

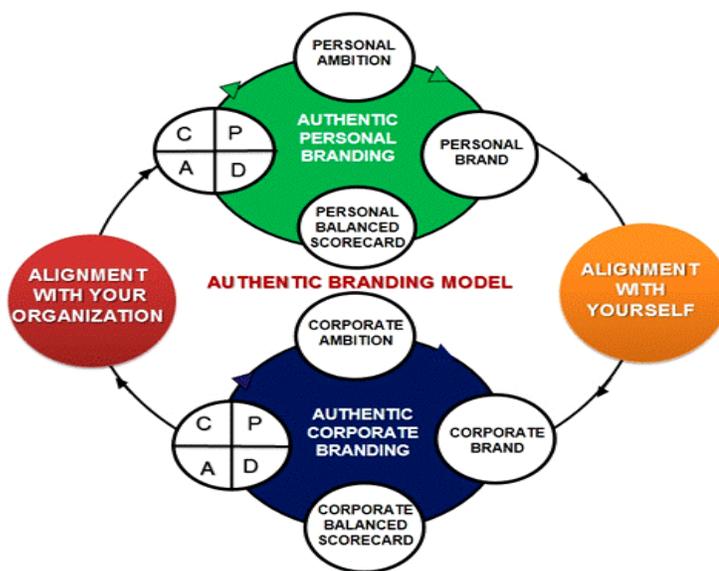


Figure 4-1

Phase 1: Authentic Personal Branding:

Personal Ambition: This phase involves a soul searching process based on thought, introspection, and self-reflection, supported by a breathing and silence exercise. Question which you can ask yourself are: Who am I, What do I stand for? What makes me happy? What do I live for? Why do I want to lead? What's the purpose of my leadership? The result of this phase is the formulation of your personal mission, vision and key roles. On the basis of insights acquired through this process, you develop self-awareness and self-regulation, which are the foundation of trustworthiness, integrity, and openness to learn.

Personal Brand: This phase involves defining and formulating an authentic, distinctive, and memorable personal brand promise, and using it as the focal point of your behavior and actions. This must be in harmony with your personal ambition. Personal ambition has no value unless you take action to make it a reality. Therefore the emphasis in this stage is developing an integrated and well-balanced action plan based on your personal ambition to realize your life objectives. It's about translating your personal ambition into action. Personal branding without continuous improvement of yourself based on your PBSC is merely cosmetic and will not lead to your sustainable growth.

Personal Balanced Scorecard (PBSC): Your PBSC entails your personal critical success factors that are related to your personal ambition and your corresponding objectives, performance measures, targets and improvement actions (Rampersad, 2006). It is divided into two external facing perspectives (Financial, Market) and two internal focused (Knowledge & Learning, Operations) perspectives. Your PBSC translates your personal ambition into manageable and measurable personal objectives, milestones and improvement actions in a holistic and balanced way. Through your PBSC you can govern yourself effectively and become more disciplined, more effective, more responsible for yourself, and more ethical. (Figure 4-2)

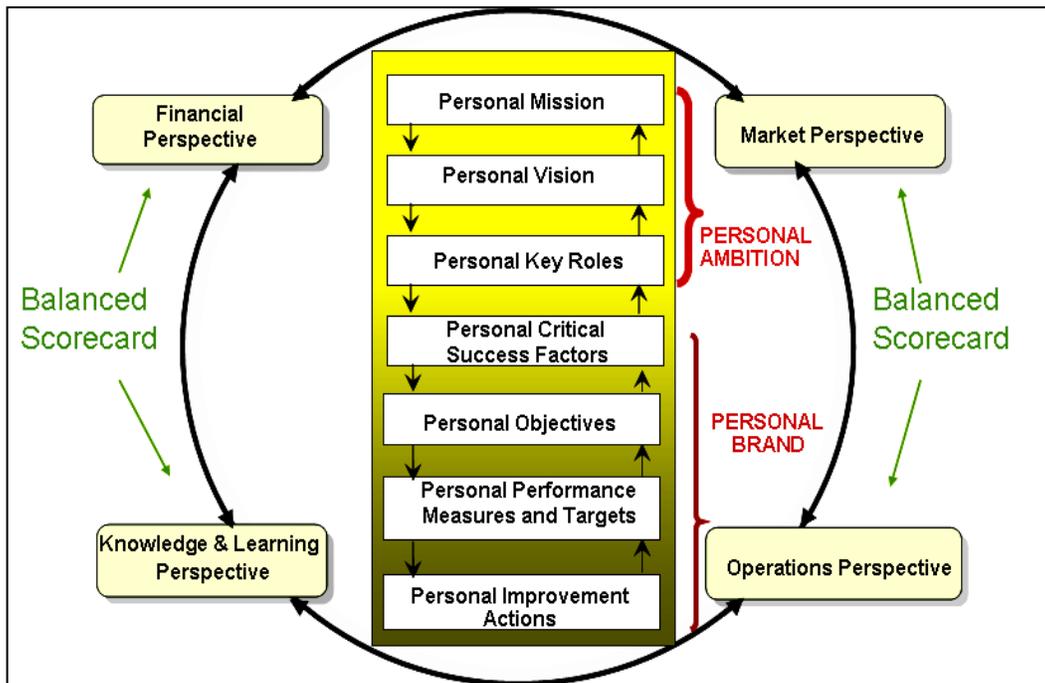


Figure 4-2

Implementation and cultivation of your personal brand: Personal ambition and personal balanced scorecard have no value unless you implement them to make it a reality. Therefore the next step is to implement, maintain, and cultivate your ambition, personal brand and PBSC to manage you effectively. This focuses on your private life and business life.

Phase 2: Alignment with Yourself:

Aligning your personal ambition with your behavior and your way of acting is needed to develop personal integrity. You need to commit yourself to live and act according to your personal ambition and to keep promises that you make to yourself. Personal branding built on the person's true character is sustainable and strong. You should reflect your true self and must adhere to a moral and behavioral code set down by your personal ambition. This means that who you really are, what you care about, and your passions should come out in your personal ambition, and you should act and behave accordingly (you should be yourself) to build trust. Building trust starts with being true and authentic to you. When people find harmony between their personal ambition and their behavior/actions, they will not come into conflict with their conscience. This process will help you to become in harmony with yourself, which is the foundation of integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, credibility, transparency, and charisma. These two stages in the authentic branding model focus on personal leadership development by cultivating your inner compass.

Phase 3: Authentic Corporate Branding:

Corporate Ambition: This phase involves defining and formulating the shared corporate ambition. It entails the soul, core intention and the guiding principles of the organization and encompasses the corporate mission, vision, and core values. (Figure 4-3)

Corporate Brand: This phase involves defining and formulating an authentic, distinctive, and memorable corporate brand promise, and using it as the focal point of the organization’s behavior and actions. This must be in harmony with the shared corporate ambition. The emphasis in this stage is developing an integrated and well-balanced action plan based on the corporate ambition to realize the corporate objectives. It offers a means to maintain balance between financial and nonfinancial measures and to connect strategic and operational standards.

Corporate Balanced Scorecard (CBSC): The CBSC entails the related corporate critical success factors, objectives, performance measures, targets and improvement actions. It is divided into two external facing perspectives (Financial, Market) and two internal focused (Knowledge & learning, Operations) perspectives. The CBSC is needed to improve the business processes continuously based on the corporate ambition in order to add value to customers and satisfy them.

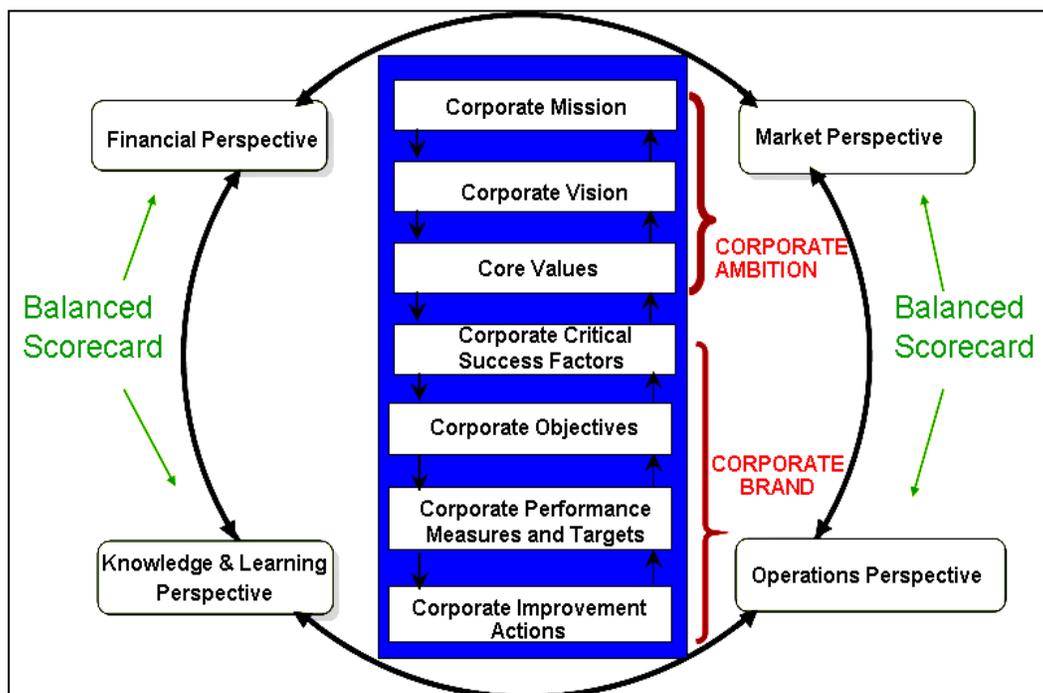


Figure 4-3

Implementation and Cultivation of the Corporate Brand: The next step is to implement, maintain, and cultivate the corporate ambition, the corporate brand and CBSC in order to govern your organization effectively, to deliver peak performance, and to create competitive advantage.

4. Phase 4: Alignment with Your Organization:

The emphasis in this final stage is aligning personal ambition with corporate ambition creating uniformity of personal and organizational values. It’s about aligning personal branding with corporate branding and getting the optimal fit and balance between these two activities in order to enhance labor productivity, to create a climate of trust, and to stimulate engagement, commitment, integrity, and passion in the organization. This is needed because staff members don’t work with devotion or expend energy on something they do not believe in or agree with. If there is an effective match between their interests and those of the organization, or if their values and the organization’s values align, they will be engaged and will work with greater commitment and dedication towards realizing the corporate objectives. Identification with the corporate ambition is the most important motive for them to dedicate themselves actively to the corporate objectives and to maximize their potential (Figure 4-4).

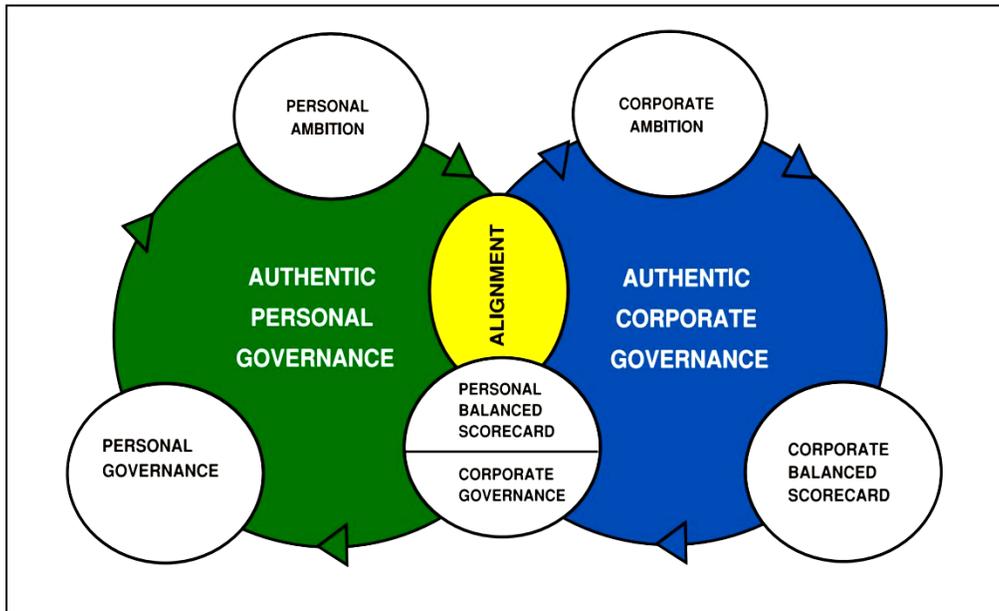


Figure 4-4

Aligning personal ambition with the corporate ambition has an impact on the organizational bonding of the employees. It energizes them and gives them the proud feeling that they count, that they are appreciated as human beings and that they make a useful and valuable contribution to the organization. Employees are stimulated in this way to commit, act ethically and focus on those activities that create value for clients. This will create a strong foundation of peace and stability upon which creativity and growth can flourish and life in the organization will become a harmonious experience.

The effective combination of all these four phases creates a stable basis for a high-performance and ethical organization. The authentic branding model gives us insight into both the way authentic branding can be developed effectively and the coherence between its different aspects. After the last phase is completed, the cycle is again followed in order to fine tune the elements with its surroundings on a continuous basis. By doing this you will constantly improve your personal performance, and continuously satisfy yourself and others on an ongoing basis. The organization will also constantly improve its performance and continuously add value to its clients.

Criteria for Authentic Personal Branding

Sustainable, authentic, consistent, and memorable personal branding is related to some important criteria:

1. Consistency; you need to be consistent in your behavior. This takes courage. Can others always depend and count on you? Are you doing relevant things again, and again, and again?
2. Specialization: focus on one area of specialization at a time. Be precise, concentrated on a single core talent or unique skill. Being a generalist without any specialized skills, abilities, or talents will not make you unique, special, and different in the near term – although this will be required later in more senior positions.
3. Authority; to be seen as a recognized expert in a certain field, extremely talented, highly experienced, and perceived as an effective leader.
4. Distinctiveness; distinguish yourself based on your brand. It needs to be expressed in a unique way that is different from the competition and needs to add value to others. It needs to be clearly defined that its audience can quickly grasp what it stands for.
5. Relevancy; what you stand for should connect to what your target audience considers to be important.
6. Visibility; it must be broadcast over and over again, continuously, consistently and repeatedly, until it's embedded in the minds of the audience. It's about repetition and long term exposure.
7. Persistence; your brand needs time to grow. It should be developed organically. You've got to stick with it, don't give up, believe in yourself, and be patient.

8. Goodwill; people do business with people they like. Your personal brand will produce better results and endure longer if you are perceived in a positive way. You must be associated with a value that is recognized as positive and worthwhile.

9. Performance; performance is the most important element after your brand has become known. If you don't perform, and improve yourself continuously, personal branding will not be effective.

When you are branded according to the above criteria and you commit yourself to act accordingly, your brand will be strong, you will distinguish yourself from the crowd, and your target audience will understand your brand much better. Building an authentic personal brand is a life management journey and an evolutionary and organic process. It starts with determining who you are at your core authentic self based on your dream, vision, mission, life philosophy, values, key roles, identity, self- knowledge, and self-awareness – rather than inventing a personal brand that doesn't reflect your true self. With an authentic personal brand, your strongest characteristics, attributes, and values can separate you from the crowd. Without this, you look like everyone else.

Wealth Generation and Financial Security

By the time individuals begin thinking about establishing their Personal Brand they have generally begun reflecting on who they are and what they hope to accomplish in their lives. For some, they may already been stimulated by thoughts of the level of income they are making, whether it is satisfactory at the current time of their lives, and if they want to equal or exceed that of those they see as competitors in achieving progress and respect. Once again, significant meaning in life may be attained by focusing primarily on the societal qualitative factors (personal, organizational, community, societal) without singular concern for personal wealth and financial security. And yet, without at least modest effort in this area one cannot assume sufficient income and wealth accumulation that will support them achieving all that they may hope to achieve.

The advantage of participating in the authentic personal and professional branding initiative in this Life Management Handbook is that its process blends the personal branding and the corporate (organization) branding initiatives to form a synthesis of ambition, branding, and balanced scorecard commitments toward integrated personal success and financial security (Figure 4-5). The required planning, documentation and execution of the project ensures a disciplined assessment of measurable progress. Setting wealth and financial security goals should be reviewed and action taken regularly.

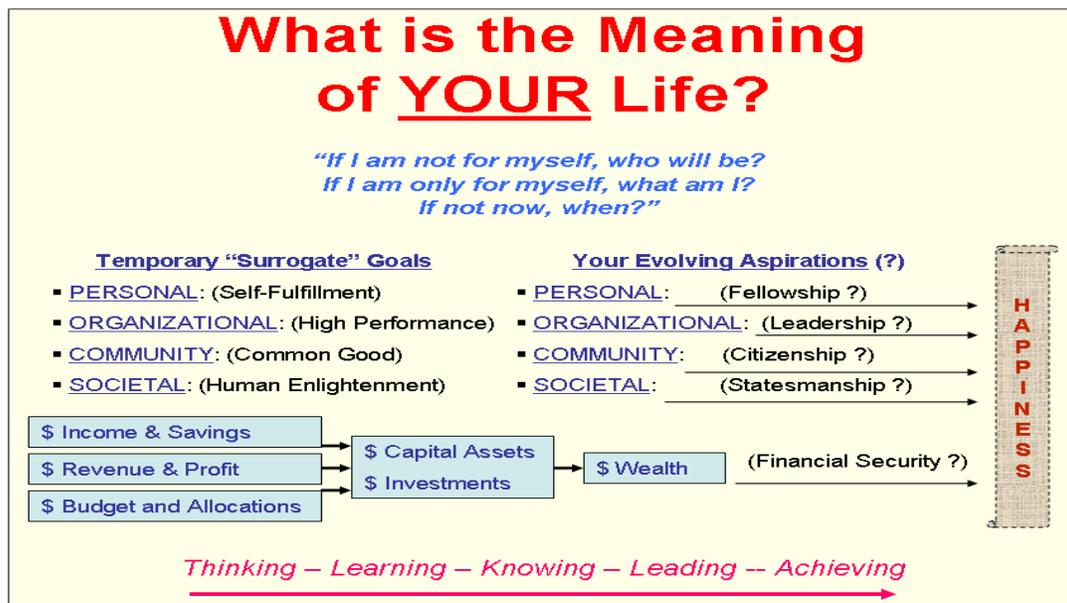


Figure 4-5

Questions on the Meaning of Your Life

How do these surrogate goals work for you right now? (Figure 4-5)

Can you venture a guess as to what might evolve as you continue to reflect and learn?

Do you recognize the importance of a *Wealth and Financial Perspective* when considering your potential financial security?

Implications for Integral Learning and Knowledge Management. The willingness and ability of people, organizations and communities to represent themselves as being authentic is based on the level of credibility they have accumulated in past and present encounters. To do so, they must have earned a reputation of being informed, open, honest and flexible in dealing with others in their family, business, community and marketplace. And, these characteristics are based, in part, on their intellectual, emotional and knowledgeable manner in conducting their relationships. Those who are multi-disciplinary and cross-trained in modern work practices and contemporary human relations are more valued and trusted by others. One's brand can be planned and improved by systematic reflection on who they are and how they want to be known.

Personal Reflection. This topic appears at the end of each chapter and is meant to serve two purposes: (a) be a reader's guide to main points and "takeaways," and (b) to encourage everyone to take a moment to engage their mental cognition and intuition on what the chapter means to them – especially at this time in their lives. Questions for chapter reflection follow immediately below; and for those readers inclined to maintain a self-assessment, your thoughts may be recorded in your *American Learnership for Life, Work, Wealth, Health and Legacy Success* which is located at Appendix B.

Questions for Discussion

1. What makes having an "authentic" personal brand a special accomplishment in today's social-economic environment?
2. Based on your experience, how common is it that a business or organization is able to accomplish an "authentic" relationship with their firm's own employees and customers?
3. Why is it likely that a firm committed to becoming authentically aligned and cohesive will become more efficient and effective in its operations?

Insights, Commitments and Skills

If you plan to participate in the *American Learnership for Life, Work, Wealth, Health and Legacy Success* self-development experience, it is suggested you record your Insights, commitments and skills to be developed here in this chapter and again in Appendix B.

My learning in terms of new insights, changing priorities, new commitments or skills I want to acquire:

1. Insights (Example): Remind myself that ...
2. Commitments (Example): Continue to ask myself ...
3. Skills (Example): Apply my knowledge and skills to ...

Conclusion

An example of a completed *Authentic Personal Brand book* is included at *Appendix C* as a detailed guide for you to accomplish personal growth and professional presence. Contact Dr. Garrity for assistance in writing your own *Authentic Personal and Professional Branding* e-book at rgarrity@alforum.org.

Once your Authentic Personal Brand has been established, your attention should turn to assisting your organization in establishing its own Authentic Corporate Brand. This is accomplished by corporate leaders collaborating in a procedure that reflects, learns and defines the organization's unique corporate ambition, corporate brand and corporate balanced scorecard. This topic is addressed more fully in *Organization System Development* (Chapter Eleven).

[Author's Note: Establishing both an Authentic Personal Brand and a Corporate Brand are functions critical in leading enterprise transformations, and are enabled by the next handbook sections on Reasoning Competencies and Social Systems Development.]