



## You won't be judged by your accent, but you will be judged by your shoes!

THE FIRST OF FOUR ARTICLES, JOHN DAVIES, A PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINER FROM THE OATMEAL GROUP, LOOKS AT PERSONAL BRANDING.

Text John Davies Pictures Catherine Taylor

If you were a brand, what brand would you be? Tiffany's, chic and glamorous, Nike, young and sporty or maybe something like BMW, high performing and suave. Companies like Pepsi spend billions every year in expanding and honing their brand, and associated attributes, but how many of us consider ourselves to be a brand with unique and identifiable characteristics?

Your brand is the foundation of your business, and as with all foundations, the risk of getting it wrong means you are forever re-building, and covering up the cracks; it's simply not worth skipping this important step in your personal development.

A personal brand is the way you communicate your vision, values, skills and attributes, and together, they form your personal brand identity that will form people's perception

when they interact with you.

Nobody understands branding better than professional services firms. Look at McKinsey or KPMG for a model of the new rules of branding at the company and personal level. Almost every professional services firm works with the same business model. They have almost no hard assets, but lots of soft assets - people, preferably smart, motivated, talented people. And they have huge revenues, and astounding profits.

Organically, you and I are 96.2% the same, but a major difference is in our personality and the way we present ourselves. First impressions count, and you give a first impression whether you want to or not, so best make it work for you.

Psychologists know that first impressions

are based on our spontaneous assessment of status, clothes, sex, age, size and posture, speech and facial expression. Depending on which author you believe, first impressions are made anywhere between 1-30 seconds, but more interestingly, are accurate 80% of the time, and may take up to 21 repeated occasions for someone to change a negative impression of you. So make sure it counts first time.

Try this as a test, ask to borrow a pen from a colleague, the chances are it will be a 27p bic, possibly a free pen, even chewed at the edges, yet this says as much about their brand and brand values as the Gucci shoes they wear.

Let's try a little social experiment. We all know that people's perceptions of us change when we dress differently, but the likes of Richard



John Davies' makeover was orchestrated by Ronan O'Quigley at Biomorphic in Swansea, as one of the UK's leading stylists and 'head honcho' of Biomorphic he will be featured in the next edition of Enterprise Magazine.

Branson, Bill Gates get away with dressing casually, regardless of the occasion, so we figured it was time to put the 'Does what you wear really matter?' debate to bed, and create two identical business and social scenarios, the only variable being the dress code.

We conducted our experiment in business environments around Swansea to include restaurants, bars, workplaces and had my colleague ask one simple question of our sample group, 'What does this man do for a living'. The results, were far from unexpected. When I wore casual clothes, respondents chose titles like shop owner, construction worker, teacher and even student. In contrast, in my smart business attire and new haircut the responses were manager, entrepreneur, and even model! (Although this was off an elderly woman

who was asked in the Opticians).

The biggest change however was attitude. Wearing a suit, cars would stop to let me cross, doors would be held open and bar staff would serve me instantly suggesting that to be heard and seen, you really need to give your brand the recognition it deserves.

So lets look at the learning points and ask; So what makes you different?

Start thinking like a brand manager, It's time to give some serious thought and even more serious effort to imagining and developing yourself as a brand. ▬

**Next issue - How to sound and behave yourself to success.**

# Top Tips

**1** So what is it about your brand that makes you unique? Is it your quality of work, expertise or reliable service?

**2** Decide what your personal brand values are, such as integrity, honesty, forward thinking etc.

**3** Decide what image you want to project for your business, if it's casual, lose the tie, you can be smart without being formal, and does it tie in with your brand values?

**4** Look at all the accessories that surround you, phones, pens, business cards; do they provide continuity for your brand?

**5** Ask a close friend or colleague what brand values they think you have, your bright orange socks may not reinforce your trustworthy brand values.

**6** And lastly, remember your personal brand values go beyond your normal working day. Wales is a small country, the chances are that you will meet current and future clients in a bar, restaurant or around town, so make sure your brand is consistent, whatever the occasion.