

Personal branding podcast: Episode 1 transcript

Cerys (Host)

Hi and welcome. I'm Cerys.

Over the next two episodes, we'll be talking about personal branding and how it can make a real difference when you're taking your first steps into the world of work.

Personal branding might sound like something only influencers or business leaders need to think about, but it's really just about showing people who you are.

In this episode, students will be pitching their questions about personal branding to industry professionals and experts. They'll be sharing practical tips and simple advice to help you build confidence and make a positive impression. Whether you're applying for jobs, networking, or creating an online profile.

First, let's hear from Rhys Griffiths, Relationships Manager at Fintech Wales. He's going to explain to us what a personal brand is and why it matters.

Rhys

I am Rhys Griffiths. I'm from Fintech Wales, where I am the Relationship Manager. But I'm also Head of Skills and Talent. That involves connecting the FinTech sector in Wales with our education providers like The Open University, helping them to, find, develop and maintain the talent within their organisations.

Okay, let's get into the first question.

Student

What does personal branding mean?

Rhys

So personal branding, you hear a lot of people say, is what people are saying about you when you're not in the room. It's how you shape the way that you come across. It's you understanding yourself and you then taking that opportunity to get that across to other people. It's really important that you understand what your personal branding is because you own that.

It's about you getting across what your expertise is, what your values are. And then I suppose how you demonstrate that in your everyday working, everyday personal life. So, it's really important in the sense of that it helps you to build trust in you as a person. And helps people to trust you and they understand what you're about. It can help you to stand out from the crowd, particularly in the recruitment process, if you understand what your own personal branding is. But it also makes you visible to others as well. So you are somebody that they want to align with, you know, you're somebody that they, that they trust, you're somebody that they want working for them in that organisation because you map to their values because you understand what your own are at the same time.

So, let's get into question two.

Student:

What qualities and strengths make you unique?

Rhys

So, I think it's really important when you're looking at your personal brand, to identify, you know, what makes you unique. But also, I think it also is important to understand where you want to go and where you want to be, and what you want to achieve. So, a big part of that is really understanding what your what your strengths are, not just sort of writing down a few sort of the generic ones like communication and skills and teamwork and that's fine if they are strengths of yours.

But I suppose it's looking at, okay, when you say you've got good communication skills, what does that actually mean? What does that look like? Is it written communication. Is it speaking? Is it presenting, you know? It's really important and really understanding that and having examples of when and where those strengths lie. And I think if you're able to understand what those strengths are, it does help you to build that personal brand even further.

Really important in this as well is about knowing what your values are, you know, what do you stand for? Because again, I think it's very easy with personal branding just to sort of think that you're going to be an influencer. It's not about that, it's what you want to be known as. You know, your personal brand can be a loud thing.

It can be a really quiet thing. And don't forget, it's about what people say about you when you're not in the room is a big part of that personal brand and the strength of it. So, knowing what you stand for and knowing what those values are, really important. And

again, I think it's, you know, almost having a bit of a like, you would with a, with a company having a mission statement, I think, it's perhaps writing down a few of those values that you have, but then forming some sort of mission statement for you and, you know, everyone talks about that elevator pitch, but when you meet someone for the first time, you know, what you want to say?

When you go around the room in a round table and everyone's sitting there introducing themselves, how can you be a little bit more, you know, be a little bit extra in terms of what you say, rather than just your name and your job title, you know, say, what is your value? What do you stand for? Why are you in that room? You know what makes you feel alive at the end of the day? And I think, again, that being able to articulate those things and understanding those things is another way of bringing people towards you. So, we talked about trust being part of that personal brand and helping people to build trust in you by having a strong personal brand.

But it also helps you then to stand out as somebody who holds those values and people can align to that, you know, you'll start to bring people to you because they feel that way as well. And also, if you look at it the other way around, when people start talking about what they believe in, their values, what their strengths are, you can be drawn to those people.

You can equally be turned away from those people based on your own strengths, values and opinions on things. So, I think that's what makes it, you know, really important. And what those sort of qualities and strengths are and really getting to grips with those. It's very easy to sit and just list. But I think if you go into a bit more depth, take that time, but also appreciate that your strengths and your values are probably going to adjust as you get older, as you change jobs, as you start to get more experienced. It's probably useful to at least once, maybe twice a year, just to sit down and readdress those, add to them, take things out. 'Actually, I don't really think that way anymore.' Or 'actually, I'm enhancing what I know, I know more, I've got more knowledge, I've got more experience. So therefore, my values are changing around that.'

Okay. We're moving on to the last question.

Student:

How do you promote yourself without making it feel like you're showing off or being big headed?

Rhys:

How do I promote myself without feeling like I'm showing off? Okay, so that's a really important question because the idea of promotion is about showing off is about

amplifying something, whether that's a product, a service, company, yourself, it's an important part of it. But I think it's really important also to recognise that your personal brand is not necessarily something that is overtly loud.

You are not looking at this in terms of, and I suppose, confusing it with being an influencer, which it is about showing off and talking about what you're doing and doing all of these things. Your personal brand isn't necessarily that. It can be that, it can be part of what you do. It can be a way that you get that personal brand out to other people, but it isn't necessarily something where, you know, if you're concerned about I'm not that type of person, and it's certainly not something that you should worry about.

So first and foremost, this isn't about becoming an influencer. It is about understanding what your strengths are. It is about understanding what your values are and it is about you, I suppose, your attitudes, your behaviours when you're with other people, when you're in that workplace, and it's how you align yourself to what interests you and what, you know, what you think is going to be something that that that you want to, stand by, from a personal perspective.

So, I think it's really important that you show enthusiasm for what you're doing, you know, otherwise, what's the point? Be an enthusiast, you know, even if you're terrible at it, be an enthusiast. And I think that's important. People like someone who is a critical thinker who is curious. And if you're enthusiastic, you're those things. So, you know, always, always have that sort of enthusiasm around.

And I think, you know, that doesn't have to be out there loud. It just has to be part of it. So, again, it's about building that trust, being visible, being someone that people could rely on, perhaps, and that could be part of your value. I think, as well, when it comes to your personal branding, essentially, you're looking for, your space, you know, where is it, where do you want to be?

So, you know, as you as you developing that personal brand, where could that fit? What sector could it fit, you know? Are the values of that sector, are the values of that company aligned with how you feel? You know? And if they are - brilliant, that's going to help you to develop, you know, you're going to be enthusiastic about what you're doing. If they are not, okay - do you need to adapt them? Do you do you stay, you know, and how do you still get those values across in that particular type of organisation? That's why it's important to really hone in on those strengths and the sort of transferability of your strengths into different areas. So, I think that's really important. And I think using platforms like LinkedIn, are a really good way of building that personal brand.

So, that could be purely from just, seeing others that align to what you, you know, how you perceive them. I think, as well, it could be where you might post things about how you're thinking, you know, what you think of about a certain topic, and that becomes

part of what you're about as well. So, I think that's an interesting platform to do it, but also being mindful, as soon as it goes on to social media, that becomes part of you.

So, if you're going to post something and it's not necessarily aligned with your values or, how you think people are going to think, actually, that's how that person thinks. So, it's there. So just be mindful of that. And if you if you're going to do it and I think as well, you know if you're not showing off. The idea here is about helping people to understand what you're about. And if you're able to articulate that, then it makes it easier for people to engage with you, particularly in the workforce, particularly when you're getting your first job, you know, people are going to ask you, why do you want to work here? You know, and if you understand yourself and your values, you know, you've really thought about that personal branding of yourself that makes it easier to connect yourself with that organisation, with the people, with things that they're doing. And in terms of why you're interested in working in there. So, I think it's really just differentiating yourself from personal branding being something that an influencer does. It is, but it's not necessarily what you should be doing in your personal brand, but it can certainly play a part in it.

Cerys

That was some really helpful advice from Rhys there. Hopefully you start to see that personal branding isn't about showing off or pretending to be someone you're not. It's actually about helping people understand who you are and what you can bring to the table. That said, putting yourself out there can feel intimidating and, let's face it, a bit embarrassing, especially when you're starting out.

Luckily, we've got help a hand from someone who's an expert in this field. Luke Rees is an inspirational speaker, and hopefully he's going to give us some practical tips on believing in yourself, confidence, and making a good first impression.

Luke

Hello, my name is Luke Rees and I'm a multi-award winning motivational speaker and proud founder of Luke Rees Inspires. I'm delighted to be bringing you this conversation around the importance of self-belief and confidence. The reason why I think is so important is because it's something that I've always struggled with, confidence and self-belief. I was always one of those people that looked at others with asking myself the life question, what if?

What if I was confident? What if I believed in myself? And I always grew up with this belief that I was never good enough, or I could never do some of the things that my peers would do. And that's because I spent the majority of my upbringing and my early

professional career not believing in myself. I only left school with 4 GCSEs. I struggled massively with my own mental health challenges within my career, and within education, particularly, growing up suffering with anxiety and depression led to me having a real lack of self-belief, absolutely zero confidence and from my view, within that, didn't lead to me having very much potential in my career. So, I kind of struggled my way through education.

And that's kind of the reason why I probably didn't do so well in school. But for me, I was always waiting for someone to believe in me. I was always waiting for someone to tell me that I could do something, or I was good enough, or these things were possible. And there was one moment in my life where that completely changed my perspective, and that was that - I've always been a strong believer that you're always that one decision away from a totally different life. And that was always waiting for someone to believe in me, someone to tell me that I am good enough, for someone to tell me that I can't do these things because my upbringing was always filled with people bringing me down.

Being told that I'll never get anywhere in life, I'll never achieve anything. I think that's one of my biggest struggles, growing up in the deprived area in South Wales, was that no one ever really believed in the community and the people around us. So, I had to make a decision. A decision that years down the line would completely change my life.

And that decision was simply to start believing in myself, and that was to stop waiting for someone to believe in me and realize that if anything was going to change, that I had to be the real, the real driving force and catalyst behind that decision. And when I made that decision to start believing in myself, I thought overnight the world would change.

But it didn't. And I think that's something that we often sometimes struggle with, with the concept of change, is that when we decide to do something for the first time, we expect it to go well, and if it doesn't go well, we dress it as a failure or I'm not good enough, or we collect the evidence that 'I told you I wasn't good enough'. 'I told you that wasn't going to work'. And that negative view on failure led to me being scared to try things, and which then impacted my lack of self-confidence and reinforced, the self-belief that didn't really exist inside of me. And what I used to do a lot growing up was I'd always look at others, and I'd always look at others and ask myself, I wish I was that confident.

What would I really do if I had the confidence? What would confidence give me that I don't have now? And when I started to repackage what confidence actually mean, what it means to me and redefine it, I learned that important lesson that I think is so important for everyone to learn today. And that is the simple definition of confidence.

Now, confidence isn't a feeling. Confidence is a skill. And, in order to develop confidence and develop self-belief and to develop that skill, it all starts in the place of being willing to try. So, for me, that's what confidence is. It's the willingness to try. I

rediscovered myself in college because I was studying a course I was passionate about. I was doing something that I enjoyed. I still had to experience a huge amount of learning. But that was really important for me to go through, because I had started to redefine failures as learning. So, rather than me saying that I may have failed a class, or may have failed a course or failed an exam or whatever that challenge may be, I decided to look at the positives and decide to reframe that experience as evidence that I can learn from.

What's one thing I can take from this? And looking at those learnings through every opportunity presented me, allowed me to eventually develop the confidence that I once then gained. And that helped when I transitioned into university, I managed to have that amazing experience because of my ability to try and give things a go. And I'll be honest, when I made the transition even outside of university and started my own business, that confidence and that willingness to try is what's got me where it is today.

One of the questions people always ask me when I do these gigs and I speak on stage in front of thousands of people, hundreds of people, whatever the room size. One of the questions people always ask me: 'I wish I had that confidence', 'I wish I was as confident as you to step on stage and share your story'.

But the reality is, is that what people don't see is the eight years of practice that I've been delivering, and I've constantly been showing up and been willing to try. We often judge people based on the outcomes and based on what we see, but what we often don't see is the years of work and that relentless ability to try, regardless of the experience or the expectation we may have.

I think one thing I struggled with when I left university was this process of where do I start? How do I take this learning I've had over the last three years, and then apply for a job? When you've got all these people applying for the same jobs and the limited opportunities out there. The voice in my head would often tell myself that you're never going to get a job when all these people are applying with all these pressures to get this job and begin your career.

And what happened when I experienced that, those feelings of overwhelm? I didn't try. I didn't take the risk. I didn't try and apply myself. And I didn't really believe in myself. Which led to me essentially what I describe as the 'As' which is avoiding - now, avoiding doing that application or taking that risk, doesn't mean you're lazy. It means that your brain is telling you that you're able to do something, that it's potentially a bit scary, that's never done before and is preparing to keep you safe.

So, for us, it's how do we then acknowledge and accept that thought, that emotional response that we have? And how do we then develop that confidence, that willingness to try? Because, here's the thing, I spent years waiting for the feeling to feel ready, to feel prepared, to feel like now's the right time, now's the perfect moment. And the problem was, I spent years waiting for that perfect moment. And the reality was, that that perfect

moment doesn't exist and it will never come. And the reason why that is, is because, like I explained, just that it's that our brains are wired to protect ourselves from threats, from risks, from things that we've never done before. And if we keep waiting for that perfect moment, that perfect opportunity, then we'll miss all these opportunities to gather evidence, to show our willingness to try.

And for me, that's what developing confidence is all about. That willingness to try and learn and give things a go. And when it comes to that perfect moment, how if it doesn't exist, how do we start? Because that's the bit that overwhelmed me and the bit that held me back for so many years. For me, I've built the framework of TRY.

So, TRY isn't it just saying that we do, it's something that we can actually practice - the toolkit. And this is something that's helped me in every day of life. So, for me, TRY stands for three things. And that is the T stands for Think small. So, when you think of what action can you take to develop confidence?

Don't think of that big, overwhelming, scary action that you've been putting off for weeks or months. Think small. What's the smallest step that you can take today towards that action? That might even be download in the application. It may even be looking at potential courses, putting your hand up in a lesson. It can be anything but think of the smallest action you can take.

Because what happens when you then commit to taking that smallest action, you then get the placebo effect, and you get the positive endorphins the result of that. You've taken that little bit of action and you're one step closer than where you were at the start of the day. That's really important.

The second thing, R stands for Reframe. So, it's all about reframing the experience. So, you're reframing setting yourself up for what can I learn from this? So rather than looking at things as failures or as challenges, reframe challenges to opportunities, reframe failures to learning. When we begin to reframe the experience and we reframe the meaning of the experience, that's when we start to tell ourselves that we're safe. And we can try. And we give yourself permission to give things a go.

And then finally, the step three for Y is Your learning. What learning can you take for this? How can you be in a better place as a result of being brave enough to give this a go? Not trying to remove the expectation that everything's going to work out, or you're going to get every job you apply for. I remember the first job I didn't get, I felt like a failure.

I felt like I've put all this time and effort at university, and what have I got to show for it. But I had to take learning from that, and I had to take learning that every interview I went to. I was that little bit better prepared for that next opportunity that that may present myself. It wasn't always about that positive reinforcement and telling myself: I can, I

will, and I must. It was simply what thing can I try and do today? When I think small, what's the smallest thing I can do today that can help me get to where I was? And for me, that's how I build confidence. So, everyone looks at me when I deliver 'Believe in yourself' and they see me speak on stages. They see the Luke that developed the confidence over eight years. They see the Luke that's been on a real journey. You know, if you think back on the very first talk I gave in front of 5 people, what you would probably see is a live panic attack, if I'm being honest. The anxious Luke, the worry, the dread. Probably similar emotional response to a very first interview I went to. I've never been so scared in my life. But that was okay. It was accepting it. It was acknowledging it. It wasn't trying to pretend that I was okay when I wasn't.

My advice for those who are embarking on this wonderful journey of developing confidence and self-belief, is that it starts with trying. It starts with thinking small and making that commitment to give something a go regardless of the potential outcome. But just giving yourself permission to learn and experience and be being brave, to have a go at something I think is really important. But ultimately, when it comes down to that self-belief, is believing in your ability to do something. And I think that's the most wonderful thing that you can give yourself right now is that belief, that willingness to give it a go. That willingness to say, you know, I can do this. This is possible. I am going to give this a go. I am going to try, you know, you know what, I can get this job. So going into something with that positive mindset is such an important thing.

My last tip for people listening. There comes a point in time where we have to stop putting time into comparing ourselves to others. That comparison trap is that is the biggest thief of joy, especially amongst young people and especially amongst myself. I'm always on my phone, comparing myself to my peers and thinking how have they got that job and how have they got that, and I diminish some of my accomplishments and achievements because I compare myself to others.

And the minute you give yourself permission to stop looking about what others are doing and start focusing on yourself, the minute that happens, you give yourself back so much energy, so much time, and also having some compassion because we don't realise what everyone's going through as well. And everyone's journey will look slightly different and that's okay. Not one journey is the same.

If it was, life would be pretty boring. All of these experiences begin with one thing, and that one thing is being that one decision away from a totally different life. Now, that decision may be to take the one small action today having listened to this podcast. That decision may be asking for a little bit of help. It may be sending that email, whatever that one decision is, make it the smallest you can and do it today.

Because I promise you that perfect moment doesn't exist. And if we can leave this episode doing that one small thing today, I promise you, your future self will thank you for it. So please believe in yourself, believe in what's possible and believe in the wonderful person that you are.

Cerys

There were some really good takeaways there from Luke. It's really inspiring to hear how we can build up our self-confidence.

Thank you for joining us for this episode, and a huge thanks to Rhys and Luke our experts. You've shared some really helpful tips there to get us started.

Next time, we'll be getting some insider tips from our industry experts who will share what recruiters are looking for and how to build your own personal brand.

Catch up then!