



# Personal Branding: Road to Authenticity

In projecting our 'Personal Brand' to others, we have to ensure that we don't unintentionally communicate a fake message.

**HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT MANY** retail shops have started welcoming customers as they walk in through the door? This is common practice in many countries, but it is new to Malaysia.

However, the greeting, which is usually, 'Hello, welcome to ...', is often done half-heartedly. Which has led me to wonder why they actually bother.

In the recent past, organisations have realised that they need to be more customer-centric, which has led to this wave of 'Hello, welcome to ...'. However, looking from the customer's point of view, it often feels rather fake

But I have to admit that not all such expressions are such. There have definitely been experiences where I have been so taken aback – but in an optimistic way – that I actually left the shop in a better mood, remembering and talking about the experience to friends and, most importantly, going back for more!

As Malaysians accustomed to the old ways, this new wave definitely takes a bit of getting used to. As Asians we are warm, cultured and altruistic but due to years of pre-programming, we do not automatically reciprocate the shop assistant's greeting. While we are aware

of fake greetings, which sometimes irritate us, when a greeting is genuine we need to reciprocate.

So where does this leave us in terms of making a transformational change in

customer service across Malaysia? How do we make this a genuine customer-centric, service-driven nation, where the individual role is the key and not what the boss or Customer Relationship Management (CRM) manual has asked us to do?

The answer is not rocket science. It boils down to us, the individual, our attitude and our motivations, all controlled by our brain.

## Our Brain and Transformational Change

When we are born, our faculties are developed with every move we make. The importance of creeping and crawling in the evolution of a baby before it walks is crucial to brain development and developing the faculties that we come to rely on later in life.

Many of the things we do are dependent on our 'hardware' or lower brain (which we share with other



QUALITIES OF THE LEFT AND RIGHT BRAINS	
LEFT BRAIN	RIGHT BRAIN
Driven by logic	Driven by feeling
Detail-oriented	'Big picture'-oriented
Can comprehend	Can 'get it' (meaning)
Facts rule	Imagination rules
Words and language	Symbols and images
Maths and science	Philosophy and religion
Acknowledges	Appreciates
Present and past	Present and future
Forms strategies	Presents possibilities
Order/pattern perception	Spatial perception
Safe	Risk-taking

species). This lower or 'old' brain is wired to help us to learn things with the intention of being able eventually to do them automatically – walk, ride a bike, drive a car and so on.

This is the 'hardware' we are equipped with. Without this 'hardware', we would go insane as there are hundreds of thousands of things we perform on a daily basis that rely on this ability to automate our tasks (like how I am now typing without looking at the keyboard).

However this 'old' brain can also learn the wrong things and do them automatically, with the person doing them having no idea he or she is even doing it. That's where the 'Hello, welcome to ...' comes from! The person's 'old' brain is saying it automatically, while his or her 'thinking' brain or 'new' brain (also referred to as the cognitive brain) is happily entertaining other thoughts!

That's why you and I react, instinctively, because *our* own 'old' brain tells us, 'This is fake'. Thus, at

the shopfront, in trying to project his or her best 'Personal Brand', the shop assistant is in fact communicating a fake message to the marketplace. Unintentionally!

### Left to Right Brain

But don't lose hope, there is a way out. To correct the fakeness, we humans can use our 'new' brain or 'software' to our advantage. However, this 'software' cannot work if the 'hardware' has not matured and fallen into place. This is why programmes that develop our brain potential are vital.

Our 'new' brain has two hemispheres as we all know, left and right. When we are under five years old, we have a very right-brain learning experience and the left brain only becomes active when we start school.

Our education system as a whole is very left-brain. While this system was powerful in dealing with a relatively stable world (where ideas and concepts tended to live longer than people), they are no longer adequate to deal with the

rapidly changing world of today where new concepts and ideas are urgently needed. This is why we have to turn to our amazing hidden resource, the right brain.


### 'Personal Branding' – The Right Brain Approach to Authenticity

The right brain is thought to be the seat of insight. Opening pathways in the right brain allows us the ability to facilitate insight and be creative.

Insight is that sudden knowing of an answer, the response on the spot that is 'just right'. By nurturing and exercising our capacity for insight, we have opened up the potential for genius of the right brain to emerge.

The exercise of 'Personal Branding', to enhance our Personal Brand, is a very creative process for us when we rekindle this right-brain experience as adults. Our Personal Brand can be defined by attributes of self-motivation, self-attitude and self-esteem, which all come from the creative potential of the right brain.

It enables the shop assistant to voluntarily greet every customer walking through the door with genuine enthusiasm which is his or her own, and not a repetition of what the boss or a CRM manual has said he or she has to do.

This applies to everyone at all stages of evolution – students, young professionals, shop assistants, corporate employees and leadership teams. 

THE WRITER IS THE FOUNDER OF OPTIONS & CHOICES ADVISORY. SHE CAN BE REACHED AT YOGA@OPTIONSANDCHOICES.ASIA