

Personal branding without myth

«I'm a bad salesperson in my own right, and besides, I dislike acting!» This is a typical reaction of a client to my recommendation to do more self-marketing. Good self-marketing, however, has nothing to do with pretence. It is also about more than having a successful presence on social media or having an elevator pitch ready.

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The title of this article refers to the book «Marke ohne Mythos» (Brand without Myth) by Arnd Zschiesche and Oliver Errichiello, who in turn refer to Rosser Reeves' book from the 1960s: «Werbung ohne Mythos» (Reality in advertising) - a classic of advertising literature.

The book «Brand without Myth» is one of the best things I have read about personal branding, although or perhaps because it is not about personal branding at all. Because often things become clearer when we look at them outside our usual field of application. While personal branding is a relatively new topic and was first mentioned by Tom Peters in an article in 1997, product and service providers have been branding for decades. So, let's learn from the specialists!

Brand as a value proposition

The message of Zschiesche and Errichiello's book can be summed up in a simple core statement, which they illustrate in an entertaining way with vivid examples of good and bad brand management: The brand is a value proposition. Brand management therefore does not begin with the creation of a great company or product brochure, but in everyday life with the delivery of a constant and distinguishable performance. Constant means that entrepreneurial action is oriented towards longer-term goals. As an example of successful brand management, they cite Audi

with its promise of performance that has been upheld over decades and is reflected in the same advertising slogan over and over again:

«Fortschritt durch Technik» (Progress through technology). As a negative example, Zschiesche and Errichiello cite another car manufacturer that has weakened its own brand by pursuing a strategy of trying to compete in all vehicle categories: Mercedes.

And what do we learn from this for personal branding? Before communicating, we have to be clear about what we stand for. Analogous to a company, as an entrepreneur on your own behalf, you define what you offer on the labour market. You define this on the basis of your experience or systematically within the framework of a personal and professional assessment. For years, I searched unsuccessfully for American literature on the subject of personal and professional assessment - I only found what I was looking for when I studied literature on personal branding. There, personal and professional assessment and personal branding are practically treated as synonyms.

Storytelling: Showing instead of rating

Once you know your value proposition, the next step is to communicate it convincingly. I recommend that you follow a simple principle: Show instead of rate! Make yourself visible to your relevant stakeholders inside and outside the company - be it in person for the physical eyes or via storytelling for the mind's eye.

And you can safely leave the acting to your competitors on the job market!

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