

# Building your personal brand

**Part of IoD Ireland's Director Development Toolkit**

# Introduction

Your personal brand is essentially your reputation. It's what you're known for and how people experience you. Jeff Bezos, Chair and Founder of Amazon coined it perfectly when he said:

*"Your Brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room".*

As you embark on a non-executive director journey it's a good time to reflect on your personal brand and if it's fit for purpose as a potential non-executive director.

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# 5 steps to build your personal brand

**There are steps we can take to understand, define, own, and manage our personal brand.**

In the digital era we live in, our personal brand is easily accessible to head-hunters, recruiters, chairs, non-executive directors, shareholders, employees, our network... the list goes on. A simple search online will create an initial impression of your personal brand. A personal brand is the unique combination of skills and experiences that make you who you are. It's about who you are, what you do, and how you do it.

Delivering your brand clearly and consistently will create a memorable experience in the minds of those you interact with and can open doors to new opportunities.

**Follow these 5 steps on the next few pages to build your personal brand:**

1. Conduct an audit of your personal brand
2. Define your personal brand
3. Craft your story
4. Share your personal brand
5. Put your personal brand to work.

**“Our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called YOU”.**

**Tom Peters**  
Management guru

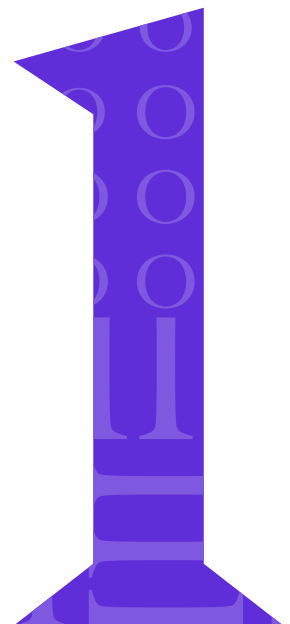
# Step 1: Conduct an audit of your personal brand

**As experienced executives, we are very familiar with auditing all aspects of the businesses we run, but have we taken time to audit ourselves?**

You will already be familiar with certain aspects of your personal brand — feedback people have given you, 360-degree survey feedback, personality assessments — but there may be aspects to your personal brand that are blind spots. As you transition from executive to non-executive you need to reflect upon any adjustments to your personal brand that may be required for you to be a successful non-executive director.

Start to reflect on your personal brand today. Ask stakeholders for the 5 words that come to mind when they think of you. It is good to include stakeholders who understand the skills, competencies and behaviours required to operate successfully in the boardroom. This exercise highlights unique aspects of your personal brand, consistencies in your brand and can uncover blind spots.

The audit should include a review of the content about you on Google and social media. This is often the first place people go to learn more about you, and it can shape their first impression.

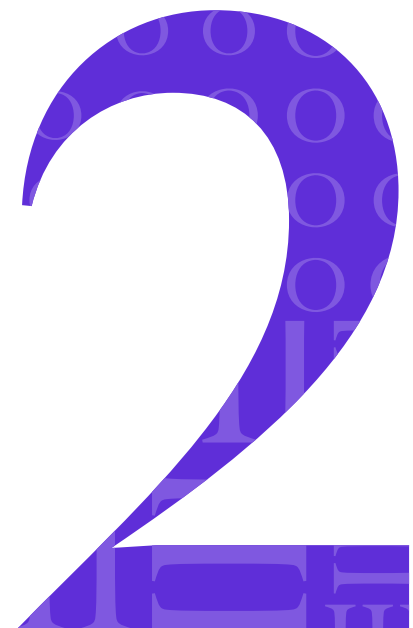


# Step 2: Define your personal brand

**Once you have spent time thinking about and auditing your current personal brand, it's time to reflect upon how fit for purpose it is for a non-executive director career path. Are there gaps in your personal brand that you need to bridge to achieve your goals?**

A good starting point is to think about your mission for your future non-executive director career and ask yourself if your current reputation can achieve your future NED career goals.

During this step also reflect on your core values, what makes you unique and what you are really good at. Analyse your desired identity versus your current brand identity. The real work is in taking the necessary actions to develop your personal brand to achieve the desired you.



## Step 3: Craft your story

Once you have audited and defined your brand it's time to craft your personal brand story. Your personal brand story is your non-executive director sales pitch. You will use it on your LinkedIn summary, when meeting head-hunters / recruiters, chairs, other non-executive directors, at networking events etc. It needs to be unique — it should crisply and clearly outline how you are different to anyone else and be memorable.

Keep your personal brand story simple and deliver it consistently. Repetition drives recognition — the more often you deliver your personal brand story consistently the more likely it will ultimately become your reputation. Being authentic helps you become memorable and to drive an emotional connection. Your story needs to focus on who you are, what you do, and how you do it. It should leave the audience in no doubt as to the value you would add to a board. Ensure you are using non-executive director vocabulary — our **Skills you need to succeed** document may be a helpful resource.

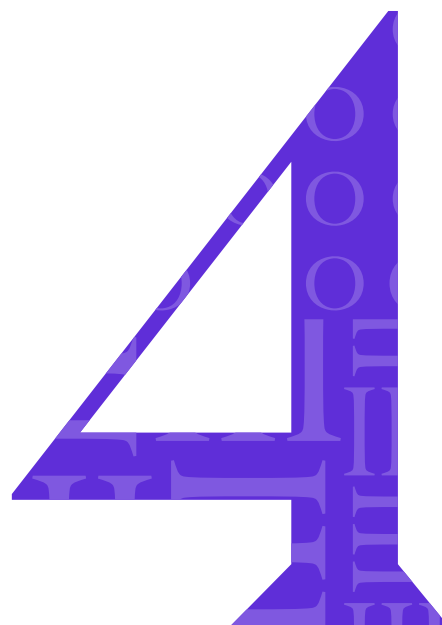


# Step 4: Share your personal brand

**Now that you have done the hard work in reflecting upon your personal brand and crafting your personal brand story it's time to share it with people. If this is the start of your non-executive director journey you will have a lot of work to do to tell people, you are interested in a board role.**

Be clear on what it is you are trying to achieve — what are your goals? What would your ideal board role be? Do you want to be a non-executive director or a chair, does your experience lend itself to chairing a specific committee? Which companies are you most interested in? How much time do you have to commit?

Once you have defined what you are trying to achieve it's time to think about who can help you get there. Who in your network can help? Meet them and tell them your personal brand story and what you are looking to achieve. If you need to improve your network to help you achieve your goals, then maximise your IoD membership where you will meet a community of chairs and non-executive directors. Invest time in regularly attending networking events, setting up coffee meetings, reconnecting with people in your network to share your personal brand story and change in career direction. Accept invitations to speak at external events, consider publishing articles in industry press, post on LinkedIn — all of this activity will benefit your personal brand.





# Step 5: Put your personal brand to work

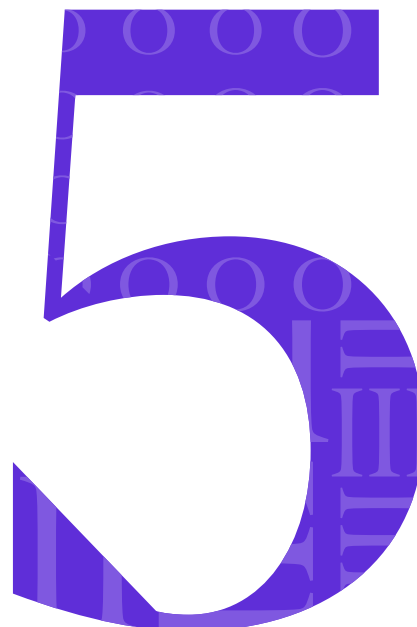
**Having completed Steps 1-4 you should feel a renewed confidence and be excited to develop an action plan to increase visibility of your personal brand.**

It is helpful to communicate to your network that you have left your executive career and are embarking upon a non-executive career or that your term on one board is coming to an end and that you're looking for your next board role. If you don't tell them, they won't know. It's important that your personal brand action plan is achievable. If you only have 1 hour a week to dedicate to it then tailor your plan accordingly. The plan is personal to you and can include elements like:

- Update LinkedIn summary and profile
- Spend 15 minutes a day on LinkedIn — liking, commenting, posting
- Speak at an external event
- Attend a networking event quarterly
- Once a month, arrange a coffee with someone in your network that can help you
- Meet a head-hunter
- Get involved in a charity you feel passionately about
- Enrol in a course to bridge a skills gap required to be successful on a board.

Schedule regular time in your calendar to track your progress on your personal brand. You'll be amazed, once you give your personal brand some time and attention, at what you can achieve. Remember if you don't define your personal brand, others will.

Click [here](#) to view a range of IoD membership supports to help raise your profile.





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