

MONDAY MANNA

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WHAT DO OTHERS SEE AS YOUR IDENTITY?

By Robert J. Tamasy

From time to time we hear of people taking a break from their jobs, college, even their marriages, to “search for their identity.” As if they might have misplaced it somewhere and are hoping it will turn up at a lost-and-found room somewhere. Such a quest might seem curious at best, foolish at worst. But in reality, our identity does mean a lot – especially in the business and professional world.

We see this in tangible ways with quickly recognisable corporate logos such as Nike, McDonald’s, Mercedes and Ford, Google, or the New York Yankees. Years ago I was in Jamaica and found it surprising to discover items in a shop representing one of the popular U.S. race car drivers at the time. Establishing a recognisable image is crucial in the competitive local, national and global markets.

Carefully designed business cards help us to instantly convey who we are and what we do. After all, one of the first questions we often ask of people we have just met is, “What kind of work do you do?” In other words, “Who are you – what are you?”

When a company develops a unique product, legal steps are taken to secure a patent or trademark so competitors cannot duplicate it. Enterprises are becoming extremely protective of their brand, whether it be an international, multi-faceted corporation like the Walt Disney Company, a prominent university, a retailing franchise, or even a well-known public figure.

Bringing this closer to home, have you ever considered that, even if you do not own a business or head a company, you also have a “logo,” “trademark” and “brand” others use to evaluate who you are and what you stand for? Recently I read this statement: “Your smile is your logo, your personality is your business card, how you leave others feeling after an experience with you becomes your trademark.” And we might add, “Whether others aspire to be like you is your brand.” What do you think people you work with regard as your “brand” or “trademark”? Do they look forward to doing business with you on a personal level?

Although the Bible does not use the terms, it offers great insight into how to go about creating a highly marketable personal trademark or brand. Here are just three examples of its wisdom on this topic:

The power of being others-oriented. Society often urges us to “look out for No.1 (ourselves),” but people who put others first are rare and extraordinary. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

The attraction of a generous spirit. There are many worthy causes to which we can give from our resources, but a sincerely generous, freely giving person can benefit others in many ways. “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The impact of showing compassion. What is the best way to treat people? Simply, treat them as you would want to be treated if the roles were reversed. “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

Postal Address:

PO Box 8168,
Woolloongabba, QLD, 4102

ABN: 42 005 622 515

Office Address:

Suite CBMC,
Sung Do Lawyers,
12 Annerley Road,
Woolloongabba, QLD 4102

Email:

admin@cbmcaustralia.com.au

Phone:

07 3172 9365

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What do you consider to be your identity, either professionally or personally? Where does your sense of identity come from?
2. The statement is made, “Your smile is your logo, your personality is your business card, how you leave others feeling after an experience with you becomes your trademark.” If this is true, how do you think friends and co-workers would describe you in these terms?
3. Have you ever had doubts about your identity as a person, wondering who or what you are, personally or professionally? If so, how have you handled that kind of experience and introspection?
4. If you were to legally establish your personal “brand,” what might that be? Are there any aspects of what your brand looks like now that you would desire to change? Explain your answer.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

- Proverbs 11:3, 21:5, 29:4;
- Matthew 5:42-44;
- Mark 12:33;
- Luke 6:38

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