

Module 3, Lesson 2 TRANSCRIPT

Glad to have you back with me here in Module 3, going through Lesson 2. Module 3 has been all about discovering your brand. In Lesson 2 we will find ways to discover what others think about your brand. Today, we're going to find out what your current reality is.

What you will discover in this lesson is why it is important to understand how your brand speaks today. I will give you three different ideas for how to ask for personal feedback, and most importantly how to interpret that feedback. And you'll learn how to use this process strategically to build your brand.

In the previous lesson, you were asked to complete the questions about your core brand. If you have not had a chance to capture the three words or phrases that you believe about your brand, please pause this video now and take a minute to go through that worksheet.

I realize that sometimes the "busyness" of life gets in the way; I really do understand that. I'm not going anywhere; so please pause the video for just long enough to capture on paper what you believe about your brand, and take this time to invest in yourself in this way.

OK. I will assume that you've done it now, and we are moving forward.

This equation is crucial. To find your current reality, you need to first understand your belief about yourself, and then combine it with the perceptions others have about you. When I only have access to one part of the equation, I have only half of the story.

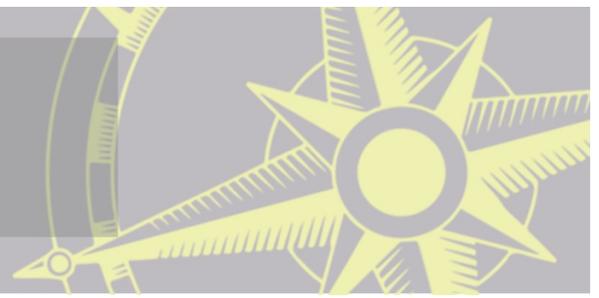
When you're discovering current reality, I want to give you these tips.

First, keep an open mind about the process. The thing I've learned most is that it actually can be a very insightful process. You don't have to dread it. Second, what we often find is that other people see us in a better light than we even see ourselves. That's an important nugget to take away. Finally, without a good understanding of the signals that we are currently sending out to other people about our personal brand, we miss an opportunity. We can not build our strong brand on a foundation of sand. It's why this kind of feedback is critical at this step. It gives you a sense of checks and balances.

Because here's the issue. You can be in the middle of the forest with a compass,

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but even a compass won't help you if we are truly clueless about where we are. We have to have some idea of where we are in this massive forest called our career so that we can begin to find our way through. We all understand the old adage -- perception is reality. It's certainly true here.

There are a couple of ways that you can do this. Option one is you can simply have a random, informal conversation. I'll give you a couple of tips about how to do that. Some people prefer that method. Option two. This is actually one of my favorite methods -- is when you specifically ask 10-15 people in your professional world to describe you in three words or phrases. I will walk you through how to do that. Then option three is for those of you who are perhaps mid-career or higher, you may even want to take the extra initiative to conduct a 360 survey. I'm using an online tool.

Here's something I've done many, many times. Be careful not to overcomplicate this step. I don't want any of you to do that. It can be quick, easy. I'll walk you through three different ways to be able to do this and you choose the one that's best for you in your career at this stage.

Option one. This is where you have an informal, random conversation. So you would start off the conversation by simply sharing that you are taking a course about personal branding and then share why. Maybe it's the fact that you are trying to get better at what your brand is. Maybe you're trying to have a greater impact at work. But think through why you are taking the course. It's a great conversation starter, and I've seen personal brands move in a positive direction just by the sheer fact that they are investing time and energy.

Then you ask them if they could give you some feedback. You can make it simple; ask them what you do well; and where have they seen missed opportunities with you?

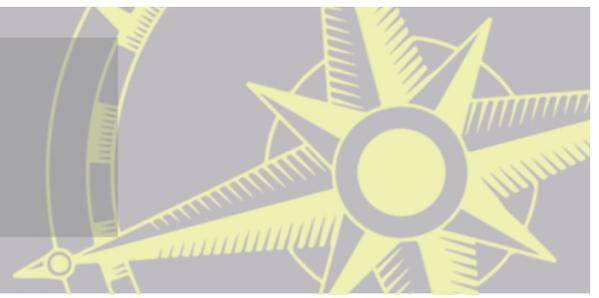
Then I always believe in having a follow-up after the conversation. You can do that by email. Or, I'm a big fan of handwritten notes. Even if it's a simple post-it note saying "Thanks for your insight today." I believe it differentiates you, and makes you stand out from the crowd. However you choose to do it, be sure to say thank you.

That's option one.

Option two. This is where you go and you ask about the actual brand words. So again, start off the same way. Share that you are taking a course about personal

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branding and share why.

Then ask them a simple question -- what are three words or phrases that come to mind when you hear my name?

Then listen closely.

Mentally note how long it takes them to answer. Because here's a couple of things. If they answer quickly, then you know that the words they gave you are pretty strong, and you'll begin to see some patterns as you go through with the rest of the folks that you're talking to.

If they take a long time to answer, then you have one of two things that are happening. One -- perhaps you're in the Neutral Zone and they can not come up with a word -- or two -- there are some possible negative brand words there that they're not sure how to share that with you.

I've seen this process actually work to start some open dialog with people that certainly strengthened their relationship and therefore strengthening the personal brand.

Again, say a quick thank you, but in this case, I would make a note on your calendar to follow up after you complete the course sharing with them that their insight was very helpful to you on your branding journey.

That's option two.

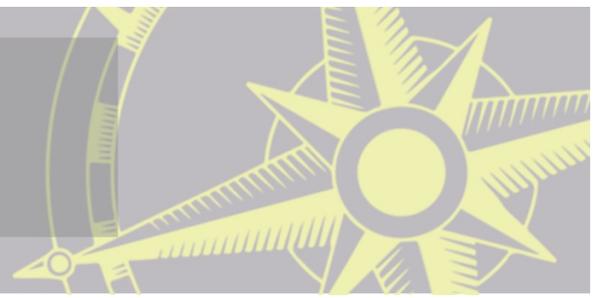
Option three is when you want to go into more depth. You can set up a brief online survey. I have listed ideas for a survey in the bonus section. What I would suggest you do is you set up a master survey using a tool, something like SurveyMonkey, and then I would make multiple copies of that survey.

Here's how you would use it.

Send one specific link -- remember, one survey, but three copies -- you would send one link to perhaps your direct and indirect reports. You would send a different link to peers or colleagues. Make sure that you put a code in the title so that you know who it is, and then the third link, I would send to senior leaders along with an email explaining why you are asking for their feedback. Again, in the bonus section, I have an outline for you.

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Here's what it does. It will give you some insight into how you are perceived by the different levels. This goes back to the brand strategy that we talked about in a previous lesson. We often are not as strong with all three levels. For some of you there may be even a fourth or fifth level; maybe it's clients, maybe it's customers, maybe it's partners. Whatever it is that your world creates, it's really important if you're going to go into this level of depth for you to find out which levels you are stronger in versus others. That shows you where you should invest your energy.

Again, make a note on the calendar to follow up after you complete this course, thanking them for the insight.

See, option two and three are a little bit more in depth, which is why I like the follow up later. The very first option with the random conversation -- people tend to quickly forget about that conversation. This is why I say to say the thank you fairly quickly.

You will be glad you asked -- I've seen this happen repeatedly -- because the act of finding that current reality opens the door. You will actually build your brand just by asking these questions. So I want you to understand that the process of this is not just to solicit feedback, but you are actually building your brand when you show people that you are going this extra step.

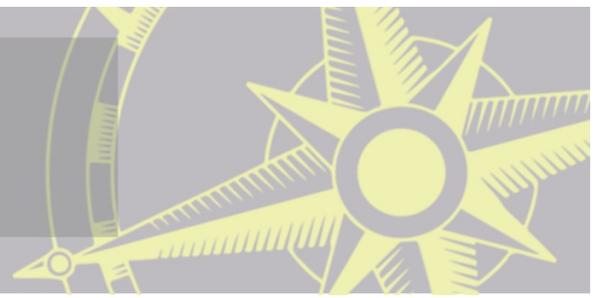
When you receive the feedback, the first thing I want you to do is look for patterns. Do you see the same kind of feedback coming back from senior leaders? Do you see the same brand words being repeated? Do you notice that no-one is repeating the same word about you. Well, that's an entirely different issue. Keep in mind when you receive the feedback, for whichever option you decide to use, be ready to discard the outliers. Just because people give you feedback does not mean you have to accept every single piece of information. Look for patterns. This is where I find the most value. Look for patterns when multiple people are saying similar things about us, then that's probably a trigger for us to dive into it more closely.

So here's the deal. Your current reality includes your own belief and what others perceive of you. Once you understand that, you can make the right choices that will lead you to future success.

Your action step for today's lesson is to commit to this journey of discovery. Seek the feedback in a manner that you feel best meets your brand at this particular point in your career. I've seen all three options work. So select the best one for

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you.

Then do the work. Make it real. Download the tips that will help you gather the feedback and then do the work. Please make sure that you complete the assignment for Lessons 1 and 2, because you need all of that information before you go into Lesson 3. If it takes you longer than a day, that's fine; feel free to delay starting Lesson 3. Or maybe you might just come back to that lesson later, understanding that what you believe about yourself and what others believe about your brand is going to be critical to the decision process you will be making in Lesson 3.

I look forward to seeing you then.