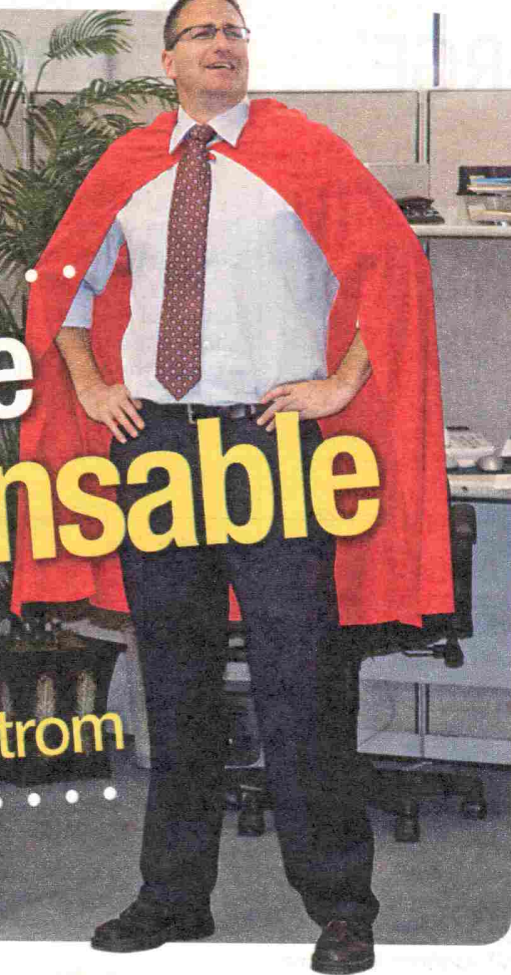


How to Be Indispensable at Work

by Martin Lindstrom



Become well known for one thing

Think for a moment about the high-profile brands that surround us every day. They each have a single phrase you can instantly apply to them: Google (search engine), Volvo (safe car), Coca-Cola (all-American), Marlboros (cowboys—hey, sorry, but it's the truth).

Now, what's the one adjective or phrase you imagine comes to mind when your co-workers think about you? Listener? Mentor? Funny? Dependable? Captain Crisis? If there isn't

What one word best describes you at work?

one, then create it. Next, begin to live it. Why just a single word? Because as a culture, we are flooded with too much information, whether we're tweeting, e-mailing, juggling cellphone calls. Amid this barrage of white noise, individuals who can attract attention via a simple association have a decided advantage.

Communicate your brand

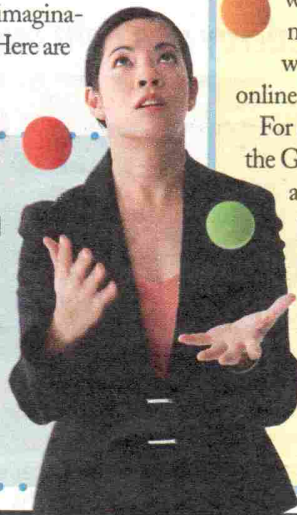
Once you've decided on the phrase that best sums you up, consider making an impression online. I can hear you now: "I can't start a website! What on earth would I put on it?" C'mon—the Internet is the most influential medium in the world, and creating a personal website is easy and inexpensive. Ask yourself: What do I have to say that's fresh and provocative? If you can come up with some intriguing observations or a new angle or point of view, then you're well on your way to creating a solid online presence.

For example: A young guy was working at the Gap when he got an idea for a video blog: a gay man giving advice about fashion trends. Hundreds of thousands of hits later (not to mention increased traffic across Gap stores nationwide), the employee had made his mark. By doling out free, useful, tongue-in-cheek advice from a novel perspective, he succeeded in creating an indelible personal brand.

Thrive in the workplace by branding yourself

risk of ending up in the unemployment line. Branding yourself is one of the best preventive strategies to make sure you survive and even thrive in the workplace. Think of your personal brand as a bank account that will only increase in

worth the more effort, thought, imagination, and resources you put into it. Here are a few tips on how to get started.



Define who you are (and who you aren't)

Ask yourself what makes you different from your colleagues at work. Your punctuality and sense of responsibility? Your ability to juggle multiple tasks without losing your cool? One of the best ways to create a personal brand is to take two everyday tasks and combine them in an extraordinary way. For example, let's say you're a cashier in a big-box store and you enjoy sitting in its fast-food emporium during your breaks. Is there anything you've observed that might be valuable for management to know about—for instance, that customers wish there were more prepackaged sandwiches and salads? Let management know. By sharing your observations, you'll set yourself apart from the competition.

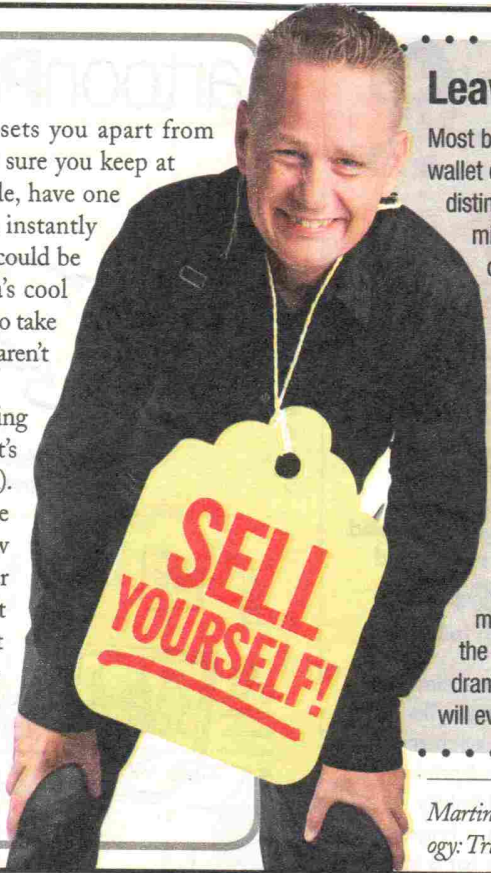
THE GLOBAL ECONOMY has taken a big hit, and millions of Americans have lost their jobs. All of us, it seems, are vulnerable. How can you increase the odds that you won't become a grim statistic of company downsizing?

The answer? Create your own personal brand. In today's uncertain financial environment, if you're just another face at the water cooler, you run a far greater

Create a signature look

Now that you've figured out what sets you apart from the other faces in the crowd, make sure you keep at it! Most famous people, for example, have one component or element that makes them instantly recognizable, appealing, or mysterious. It could be Clint Eastwood's squint, Barack Obama's cool intelligence, or Will Ferrell's goofiness, just to take three examples. Believe me, these elements aren't going anywhere soon.

For most of my career as a global-branding expert, I've dressed head-to-toe in black. (That's me in the photo. What can I say? I like black). Apart from my work, it's how people recognize me, occasionally even in the streets. Every now and then, I mix things up by wearing other colors. And guess what? People walk right past me, completely oblivious. So, without being flamboyant about it, find a signature look that works for you, then stick with it. You'll become the equivalent of a celebrity in your office—and ensure you keep your job long after the recession has become a distant memory.



Leave a personal mark behind

Most business cards bore you silly, right? You tuck them inside your wallet or purse, then promptly forget about them. My advice: Create a distinctive mark or "signature" that other people can't get out of their

minds. It can be a logo, a symbol, or a saying you affix to the end of your personal e-mails. Once again, combine two elements that have nothing to do with each other—flying monkeys, for example. Whenever I think about *The Wizard of Oz*, those horrible flying monkeys spring immediately to mind. Why?

Because as we all know, monkeys don't have wings (at least the ones I know). If you create an equally dramatic mark or signature, I guarantee no one will ever overlook you.

Create a distinctive and unforgettable business card



Martin Lindstrom, an international marketing expert, is the author of "Buyology: Truth and Lies About What We Buy."