

Leveraging personal brand to build your company's brand

 By [James Maposa](#)

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Building a personal brand is a lot of hard work based on competition being at its most intense. To illustrate my point, when in university, one of my professors, a British gentleman, always used to say to us that the thing that shocked him the most about working in Africa is that not a lot of Africans knew about Africa. At that time, he had travelled to more African countries than our class (30 students) had been to, combined. His travels had thus become an asset for him, knowing the different cultures, their way of doing things and how to navigate when in these territories. This was an asset which he monetized, as he was sometimes invited as a strategic advisor to businesses to give them an overview of the lay of the land. How's that for positioning and differentiating yourself?

To add to the above, I share another story to emphasise how intense the competitive landscape has become within the local market. A few years ago, I was interviewing for a job at a leading global strategy consultancy, headquartered in the US. The employer has a rigorous recruitment process which includes a series of rounds of interviewing. What intrigued me was the various nationalities I encountered during my interviews. The HR consultant came from Zimbabwe. My first interviewer was Russian. The second was English. The third was Indian, with the last being an American, while all of these interviews were taking place in Johannesburg, South Africa! This suggests that due to our global connectedness, your competition is no longer restricted to your fellow ex-student or your homeboy. No, your competition for a job in South Africa could be a Polish man/woman who's just completed a Master's degree in mathematics and statistics, never been to Africa, but has been developing algorithms since he/she was eight years old.



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So, when developing your personal brand, it is important to embrace local, but always think global. Relate to the local context like no other, but always invest in fully understanding the global trends of your chosen niche. This could enable you to better position yourself from a branding standpoint. I have an admiration for CFA graduates. That professional qualification is a truly sought after qualification, with what you learn being transferable to any local market. There's two or three people I know who've migrated to Canada and Australia because of the CFA qualification. The qualification has helped them stand out and because of how difficult it is to make it all the way to level three, your personal brand gets a major boost from a go-getter perspective.

From a small business viewpoint, one way to enhance your fledgling business is to extend your personal brand to it. If done right, the transfer of your personal equity into your business could be the boost it needs to establish a firm and evolve progressively. In the professional services sector, there are often strategic hires of individuals with strong personal brands within a given sector/area. We refer to these individuals as subject matter experts and leverage their experience and

expertise to draw business our way. Most clients, in an effort to obtain the best bang for their buck, only want to deal with the best. If the best are a part of your organisation, you're assured that clients will pay attention when you unpack how you can assist them to great benefit. Examples include Michael Porter and Monitor, Michael E. Raynor and Deloitte, Clayton Christensen and Innosight and Dave Yeske and Yeske Buie, to name a few.

Building a personal brand could thus be one of the tricks that can be leveraged to build a successful business for yourself in the not-so-distant future. Remember to embrace local but think global...

ABOUT JAMES MAPOSA

Maposa is the founder and managing director of Birguid, a research and advisory company. Maposa has 15 years work experience, mostly spent in research and strategy consulting. Maposa is passionate about socio-economic development, business growth and continuity.

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