

**Remarks by
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**Before the Opening Dinner
Personal Branding Symposium
Palm Beach, Florida
January 24, 2010**

My name is Garland, and I am a recovering journalist. Apologies to my focus group veterans. I'm pleased to be here... see some familiar faces... have the chance to talk about something that I live and breathe - communications and branding. I'm the kid who at eight knew he was going to be a reporter - just like Superman. Years later, I found out first hand what a reporter earns and substantially revised my career ambitions. I was thrilled to hear so many of you say branding is high on your agenda. I think we are going to have a lot of talk about - a lot to learn and sort out - and a lot of fun in the process. But be warned... I get so worked up on this subject that you may have to hit me with a tranquilizer dart at some point. I get excited. And I'll do my best to get you excited, too. Okay, maybe excited is too strong a word. But 'engaged' isn't.

Right off the bat there are a few things you need to know about how I approach this subject. Bob mentioned earlier that he would leave it up to you to figure Garland out on your own. I think he was politely trying to say that my style may be a lot less buttoned down than commonly prevails in matters as serious as this is. I'm passionate about what I do, and I am a southerner, so that's a prescription from something halfway between a grad school lecture and a fundamentalist revival meeting. I like to interact with others... I like dialogue, not lecture... I believe in making a point with something other than a 300-cell table full of data you can't read let alone absorb. I like to prod and poke fun and say outrageous things to challenge conventional thinking and get people out of their traditional, comfortable ways. That's part of my personal brand. And it's also a long-winded way of saying Tuesday will indeed be an interactive and dynamic work session, and you all are going to be in the cross-hairs. Get ready. You've been warned.

Tonight, I want to do a little stage-setting... just put some things out there to get you thinking about branding and how it relates to executive search. I became fascinated with branding several years ago when I had one of those mental insights that usually comes from real study or too much drinking. Branding is the 21st century's addition to the art of effective communication. What the hell does that mean?

How many people here are part of the digital age? How many TVs do you have? Cell phones? E-mail accounts? How much junk mail do you receive? How many ads do you put up with? We're swamped more communication than ever before. And we're creating more of it every day. I believe it was Noam Chomsky or one of his ilk who noted that technology has enabled us to create more data and information in the past decade than in all of previous history. Our next great challenge as a society may well be how we transform all this data and information into knowledge. And if you don't think that's important to you, remember that knowledge is the cornerstone of trust.

Forgive me if I play the 'gee whiz' numbers game. The English language has roughly a half-million words – close to double that if you add compound and scientific words. We each speak somewhere between 6-8 thousand words each day, from an average working vocabulary of normally up to 20 thousand, and we use the same 2000 words most of the time. For search consultants, I think the vocabulary is more like 20 when it comes to talking about your brand. But we'll get to that later. Every year, we publish another 172,000 books, 20,000 magazines, put up 400,000 billboards. 99 percent of TV households have a TV – two thirds have three or more – and we watch an average of 28 hours per week – plus another six on "time shifted" TV. The radio is on for just over three hours every day for most of us. We see an estimated 3 thousand ads every day – on TV, radio, grocery bags, receipts, flyers, t shirts, bus cards, web sites, pencils, coffee cups and grandma's shoulder. If you spent 10 seconds on each one of the 3 thousand, you'd spend 16 hours of your day looking at or listening to ads. And experts say it's going to be 20 thousand once the digital age is in full flower.

We do it to ourselves, too. We send 97 billion – yes, billion – emails globally every year. We have 4.1 billion cell phones, 276 million here in the US, and 84% I'm sure from personal experience have that same annoying ring tone. We have an estimated 60 million blogs worldwide. We send 4 million text messages daily – roughly 15 for every user per day, on average. I could spout equally grim statistics for quite a while.

The important issue isn't the statistics. It's how do we cope with that overload. How do we avoid going stark raving mad from all the communication noise around us? We compress information. We condense it. We powerpoint it. We filter it. We tune it out. That's why in my short young professional life I've seen the average TV soundbite go from 42 seconds to 9.8 seconds and now I'm told to 7.2 seconds. Newspaper readership is down by almost a third, while TV viewership grows. It's why one study showed a typical 30-minute major market news show had only 4-6 minutes of what can be defined as hard news – roughly 600 words. Heck, if you took a transcript of the entire CBS evening news, it still wouldn't fill two-thirds of the front page of the New York Times. Can anyone be really surprised, then, that when asked by AC Nielsen to name three justices of the US Supreme Court, only 17% of Americans could do so. But take hope and have faith, people. Half – 49% to be precise – could name each and all of the Three Stooges.

So what the heck does all this have to do with branding, and why should any executive search consultant give a rat's patootie about it anyway? Here's the reason, and here's why you are here with us.

You face the same problem of cutting through the clutter to get to your prospective clients. How do you contend with the competition for attention, the banality of most advertising and messages, to say something relevant and meaningful? How do you overcome the lack of any kind of real differentiation in people's minds about who you are and what makes any one of you better than another? How do you talk about the value you offer if you can't even get through to them? How do you tell your story – and get it across in a way that people's perception of you matches reality... that you get to people so they can see how you stack up against the standards and values they perceive to be important to them? That is what we will explore here in the next few days. We're going to look at how others have done it – and what best practices we can apply. We'll create. We'll share. We'll steal, too. I'm not proud.

Remember I mentioned that great moment of clarity I had about branding? It's really not much more than this. Business has historically used the concept of 'brand' to cut through market clutter, in order to drive people up the marketing chain from awareness to choice and loyalty. That is, branding was a way of selling stuff. Today, in the midst of the digital revolution, people are beginning to apply the same principles – branding principles – to getting to those they most want to reach, and those they HAVE to reach. Branding is no longer exclusive to retail sales, to investor relations or anything so narrow. It's no longer about selling stuff. Branding principles can be used to connect you efficiently and effectively

with those who otherwise might not get the memo. It can help you reach not just more people but more of the *right* people. Personal branding is in many respects an updated version of what we old fogies used to call Reputation Management. It's about aligning your desired reputation with who you really are – or more cynically, who you want to be seen as. In professional services, the personal part of branding – I argue – is critical to your future not just in a changing profession but a changing world.

Thus endeth the lecture. We've all had a busy day, a good meal and I hope a refreshing beverage or two. But before we call it a night, let's have some fun. I promise we'll make this quick.

What is a brand? Which brand names spring to your mind? Now ask yourself why. What makes those specific brands stick in your mind? In preparation for our workshop tomorrow, I want you all to think about that tonight and come prepared to talk about brands you know – and how they worked their way into your mind so they magically appeared when you were asked to name a brand. Think about people who spring to mind the same way – people who have what you would call a personal brand. Over the course of the day, we'll explore how those brands came to be so strong and powerful – and how you can apply those same principles and behaviors to building your own distinctive personal brand.

But for now, sit back... relax... get to know each other better. But come ready for a full-contact immersion into branding tomorrow.

You've been warned.

Thanks, everyone.