



# **“BRAND BOOSTER” MASTERCLASS**

**GIVING YOU POWERFUL TOOLS TO BUILD  
YOUR PERSONAL AND BUSINESS BRAND**

- What is a brand? What's yours?
- Developing rapport
- Ten essential tools in brand building
- Seven top tips to boosting your brand
- Action planning

**PRESENTED TO SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY  
HATCHERY GRADUATES  
WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH 2011**

Ideas, comments, questions?

Contact Faye Smith: [faye@keepyourfork.co.uk](mailto:faye@keepyourfork.co.uk)

## From Who? to YOU!

### Building your personal brand and boosting your business profile



*Building your brand is like the coin machine at the fairground...*

## Introduction

What is a brand?

So what's the difference between a brand, values, image, logo, strapline?

***You already have a brand...***

"Your brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room."

**Jeff Bezos, Founder of Amazon**

"Regardless of the business you're in, we all need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies- Me Inc. Our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called **You**.

It's that simple- and that hard."

**Tom Peters**

"If you're not consciously working on making your brand exactly what you want it to be, then it's probably out there beyond your control, undermining the success you are capable of achieving."

**Brenda Bence**

"Focus more on trying to figure out what you love, than trying to figure out how to brand yourself.

A personal brand that stands for nothing is not very useful. The process of branding yourself is something that has to go hand in hand with what is unique about you."

**Penelope Trunk**

**Your self-impression becomes how people perceive you.**

How would you describe yourself?

**ME**

**Other people's description of you is part of your brand.**

What do you think your close friends, clients, family might say about you?

**ME**

TASK to ASK! Who's in your ten?

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## Self branding toolkit

1. Business card
2. CV
3. References, testimonials
4. Case studies
5. Profile
6. Photos
7. Website, video, news, blog
8. Social media: Facebook, Linked In, Twitter
9. Personal style & image
10. Body language and rapport building

## Tip 2: Creating a great Curriculum Vitae

Your CV is a vital tool in the job seeking process. It's your first chance to impress a prospective employer, providing details that underline your suitability for the role. On average, recruiters take just eight seconds to decide whether or not to keep a CV, so you need to be on the ball.

A great website for a whole range of CV building tips and plenty of time saving templates to choose from and download is <https://www.cvbuilder-advice-resources.co.uk> or the Business Balls website

[http://www.businessballs.com/freematerialsinword/free\\_cv\\_sample\\_template.doc](http://www.businessballs.com/freematerialsinword/free_cv_sample_template.doc)

**These top five tips will give your CV maximum impact:**

### 1. Keep it concise

Recruiters are often faced with mountains of CVs and don't have the time or patience to trawl through a rambling document. Remember that your CV is only the first step, a way of getting your foot in the door, so keep it punchy. Make it no more than two sides of A4 paper and save the real detail for your interview.

### 2. Tailor your CV

Take time to adapt your CV for each individual role you apply for. Research the company and use the job advertisement to gauge what they are looking for in an employee. Link your skills and experience to each individual requirement of the role- it's how most applications will be assessed.

### 3. Don't leave gaps

Gaps invite the recruiter to guess what you were up to, so instead of allowing them to make their own assumptions give them the details. Even when not in paid work, you can develop 'soft skills' such as communication, teamwork or problem solving.

### 4. Ensure it's free of errors

One of the easiest ways for recruiters to weed out weaker CVs is to scan them for errors. If you fail to check your CV for basic spelling and grammatical mistakes, you are setting yourself up for a fall at the first hurdle. Most errors can be rooted out using your PC's spell-checker, but you should also ask someone else to read your CV and give you their opinion.

### 5. Tell the truth

It's one thing to highlight the positives on your CV, but telling blatant lies is a bad idea. You are highly likely to be caught out and your application rejected. Many companies check the facts – such as qualifications – that candidates supply. And a good interviewer will soon spot any inconsistency in your story, even if it concerns your leisure activities. It would be hugely embarrassing to be caught out by an interviewer who's an expert in your half-baked hobby.

## Getting the structure right

A great CV highlighting relevant skills and experience will considerably boost your chances of getting an interview, whereas a poor one could ruin your chances before you've even begun. When submitting individual job applications, you should tailor your CV to each role to emphasise the reasons why you're right for the job.

If you follow a basic structure, you can present the information in a clear, concise and persuasive way:

## **6. Personal details**

Include your name, address, phone numbers and email address (make sure this email address looks professional- "PartyAnimal17" will not go down well with employers!) You might also wish to include details about your nationality, age and driving license, but these are not essential.

## **7. Work experience**

List the most recent experience first, continuing in reverse chronological order. Describe your work experience in short sentences using straightforward, positive language and highlight your key achievements.

## **8. Education**

List brief details of your academic and any other qualifications (eg food hygiene, first aid) along with the grades attained. **Applicants looking for their first job since leaving education should include this information above their work experience.**

## **9. Skills**

Include specific skills such as IT packages or languages and state whether you're at a basic, intermediate or advanced level.

## **10. References**

It's not necessary to note the details of your referees on your CV, but you should state that details of references are available on request. If this is your first job, it is a good idea to nominate tutors or mentors. Do not forget to ask your referees first for permission to cite them.

## **11. Hobbies**

Keep these short. If your skills haven't already persuaded recruiters to offer you an interview, the fact that you enjoy five-a-side on Saturday afternoons won't change their mind. The idea is to give the interviewer a more rounded picture and, perhaps, something more personal to discuss with you. Hobbies that indicate you are looking after your health and team- spirited are always useful to include. Reference to the regular Friday night city centre pub crawls is best left out!

## **12. Presentation**

Keep your CV to two sides. It should look clean and tidy with no frills or fancy attachments, and all the information should be clearly signposted. If you are printing and posting your CV, stick to good quality white paper.

## Sample Curriculum Vitae

### Curriculum Vitae

Emma Ward  
1, School Road  
Dore  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S17 1AA  
0114 2233445/ 0777 223344  
Date of birth 26.06.1991

### Profile

I am a hard working and enthusiastic student wishing to make a career as a social worker when I have finished studying.

### Education and qualifications.

2002-2009 Sheffield School  
School Road Sheffield S17 1AA

GCSE Examinations Summer 2007

History- B  
English Literature- A  
English Language- A  
Mathematics- B  
Religious Education- A\*  
Double Award Science- AA  
Spanish- A  
French- B  
Statistics- C  
Food Technology- B

A Levels predicted grade: B/A

English Literature  
Psychology  
Religious Studies

### Work experience

Two weeks work experience at the Very Nice Café  
Very Nice Cafe: June 2007- present  
Kumon Assistant- August 2007- present  
I am a very experienced babysitter.  
I have also worked as a paper deliverer and a student flat cleaner.

### Interests and hobbies

I enjoy swimming, jogging, spending time with friends.

References.

## Emma Ward

Telephone 0114 2233445 Mobile 0777 223344

1, School Road  
Dore  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S17 1AA  
Date of birth: 26 January 1991

## Profile

I am a hard working and enthusiastic student who has developed a wide range of skills through extensive paid and voluntary work, combined with my positive and caring attitude and commitment. After a year of work experience I am committed to a university course to ready me for a career as a social worker.

## Experience

Over the last three years of school, I have developed a wide range of skills in my three jobs.

- **Very Nice Cafe: June 2007- present**

After only two weeks' work experience, I was offered a part time job at a busy, award winning café in the city centre. There I have learnt how to build good team relationships, negotiate roles and compromise where necessary. I have also learnt the importance of clear communication skills, complaint handling and excellent customer service. I have never missed a day of work and am now trusted to bank large amounts of money.

- **Kumon assistant- August 2007- present**

In my job as a Kumon assistant (Maths and English development classes) I have to encourage reluctant young children to complete class work when they are often tired, irritable and rude after a long day at school. I was recommended for this role, by the parents for whom I baby-sit, who commended my empathy with children, patience, tolerance and positive attitude.

Since 2005, I have held jobs as a **daily paper deliverer and a student flat cleaner**, where I have been commended as reliable, hardworking and thorough. I am also a very **experienced babysitter** who is trusted to provide safe and friendly childcare on a weekly basis to local families.

- **Voluntary work**

At 15, I **organized fundraising events** and saved hard to visit Lourdes as a young helper. Over that week, I was paired with an elderly wheelchair user which gave her the freedom to enjoy the activities she wanted to participate in.

Member of two groups at my local church. A '**soup run**' which is helping me to gain a greater insight into how people deal with difficult social circumstances and helping with a group for **people with disabilities** and their relatives and carers. From this I have seen first hand the amount of support they need, both physically and emotionally.



## Skills and achievements

- ◆ Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award
- ◆ Grade 3 piano
- ◆ Guides' Baden Powell Award
- ◆ Performed major roles in various school drama productions

## Education

2002-2009 Sheffield School  
School Road Sheffield S17 1AA

### **GCSE Examinations Summer 2007**

History- B  
English Literature- A  
English Language- A  
Mathematics- B  
Religious Education- A\*  
Double Award Science- AA  
Spanish- A  
French- B  
Statistics- C  
Food Technology- B

### **A Levels predicted grades: A/B**

English Literature  
Psychology  
Religious Studies

## Training

12 week Junior Sports Leadership Award

## Interests

I enjoy keeping fit through regular jogging and swimming, reading modern international fiction such as Kite Runner, cinema going and spending time with my friends.

## References

Excellent education and personal references available on request

## Tip 3: Ten ways to create compelling testimonials

- *Learn what your customers value most*
- *Anticipate and address prospects' concerns*
- *Use your clients' brand to reinforce yours*
- *Drive traffic to your site and accelerate the sale*

Testimonials help accelerate sales. That's because the perspective of their peers is among the most valued information sources of your prospective customers.

They value testimonials even when it comes from vendors in the form of endorsements—and is likely to have inherent bias. If they didn't, they wouldn't seek out referrals, ask for references, or download case studies before making major investments of their time or money.

Most prospects are not experts in purchasing the types of products and services you offer. Therefore, they take steps to reduce the chances of making the wrong decision.

They turn to testimonials because testimonials are readily available and because they hope to learn from others' experiences. For example, testimonials may help prospects to identify buying criteria they may not have otherwise considered, or to get a better sense of the level and quality of results they can expect to achieve.

Getting such information quickly, and with minimal effort, can speed the purchase. Therefore, it's incumbent upon you to have it at the ready.

Here are 10 steps you can take to create compelling testimonials.

### **1. Determine what testimonials you'll need**

Articulate your objectives. What is the profile of the individuals you hope to influence? What action do you want them to take after reading the testimonial?

Now, step into their shoes. What will they need to hear to take action—and from whom?

Every prospect's situation is different and so each seeks different information:

- Some will want testimonials that speak to how you helped others with similar situations or challenges.

- Other prospects will want to hear from "someone like them" to get confirmation that you understand their situation. That person may be someone in the same industry, someone who performs a similar function at another company, or someone who has a similar operating environment.
- Still others will want to hear from your big name or prestige customers.

Develop a grid that lists customer attributes on one axis, and customer concerns on the other. Use the grid to slot the testimonials you have and track the ones you still need to get.

## **2. Ask every customer for a testimonial**

There are many benefits to getting testimonials from your customers. Preparing a testimonial compels customers to reflect on the value they derive from your company and its services. Such reflection tends to reinforce their appreciation of that value.

Testimonials also provide you with the opportunity to learn what your customers found most valuable—versus what you assumed mattered most—so that you can sell that same value to others.

Another reason for asking every customer for a testimonial is that you'll need a lot of testimonials to address every prospect's specific needs.

## **3. Tell your customer how you plan to use their testimonial**

Help your customers help you. To prepare an effective testimonial, your customers need to know what you're trying to accomplish. Like you, they need an understanding of the target audience and the objective of the testimonial. They can then think about their experiences with your business from that perspective.

The other reason for telling customers how you plan to use their testimonial is to increase their comfort level. Most people are more amenable to making specific comments than to giving sweeping endorsements—especially true for customers who have had experience only with particular aspects of your business.

## **4. Offer to help prepare the testimonial**

The obvious reason for offering to help customers prepare the testimonials you request is that it places less burden on them and ensures that it will get done. The more important reason is that you can help shape the content!

Your assistance may take several forms:

- You may give customers a list of questions, a template, or an example of the type of testimonial you are seeking—and give them the option of just answering the questions or writing the entire testimonial.
- Or for those who prefer less structure, you may just ask to have a brief discussion about your requirements and their experiences before they write the testimonial.
- Or for those who want minimal involvement, you may decide to interview them (or simply have captured a comment they made earlier) and then present them with a draft testimonial for approval.

Note, however, that the operative words are "help prepare"—not "write for them." Testimonials are most valuable when they capture the customer's experience, and do so in his or her own language.

## **5. Make it specific**

Effective testimonials are specific. They document particular achievements, reference precise value, or allude to unique services. As noted earlier, people tend to discount unsubstantiated, generalized assertions.

## **6. Attempt to quantify value**

Numbers sell. They help prospective customers visualize the impact your solution will have on their company.

Attempt to answer these questions: "how many?" and "how much?"

For example: How many new accounts did they win because they availed themselves of your solution? How much revenue did your solution help them generate? How much time or money did it save? How much did the level of rework or returns drop? How much did their employee or customer retention rate improve?

## **7. Keep it short**

There are many types of third-party endorsements: testimonials, references, case studies. Of those, testimonials are the shortest.

Individual testimonials tend to be just one component of a larger communication. Some companies present a list of testimonials to demonstrate the breadth of their capabilities

and customer base, or the consistency of the value they deliver. Others use testimonials to add credibility to content in a letter, article, or on a web page. In any case, if they're too long or too complex, they lose their value because people tend not to read them.

## **8. Include the customer's name, title, and company**

Anonymous testimonials don't pack a punch. One of the first things people do when reading a testimonial is look for the source. They do so to assess the relevance and credibility of the statement. For some, the absence of identifying information becomes a cause for concern, even when none existed before.

## **9. Place your testimonials where prospective customers will see them**

Use your testimonials on your website and in direct marketing campaigns—but don't stop there. Testimonials have always been an effective selling tool, but today they are more important than ever.

Before prospects first contact a company, many search the Web to find out what others have to say. One of the places they turn, after reviewing analyst reports and the company's website—and running searches on Google and on various social media platforms—is to executives' profiles on LinkedIn.

So think about placing your testimonials in social media. Ask customers to tweet them and post them on LinkedIn. Make sure they appear wherever customers turn for information.

## **10. Consider enlisting help**

Writing effective testimonials isn't easy. You need to accomplish a lot in very little space—yet capture the customer's sentiment and his or her words. It takes a strategic mind to anticipate and address prospects' information requirements—and strong writing skills to convey the message shortly and succinctly.

If you do decide to enlist help, look for marketers who have done a good job with their own testimonials. This is one service you can evaluate before using!

Reference: Marketing Profs- Barbara Bix

## **Email Campaign Testimonials: How to Maximize Customer Praise**

Many books open with forewords, introductions, and acknowledgments; Harvey Mackay's best-seller *Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive* opened with 15 pages of testimonials from everyone from President Gerald Ford to the Reverend Billy Graham.

The point? By the time the reader read those 15 pages, they were so convinced that the book would change their lives that what followed practically didn't matter.

Welcome to the power of the testimonial, a potent plug that can make people as much as seven times more likely to buy or try than if they saw a paid advertisement.

Email-based testimonials can be just as persuasive, but the key is to maximize their power. Here's how to do that...

### **Gather information**

There are many effective ways to garner beneficial testimonials for your brand. Email surveys and customer ratings are the leading way to accumulate textual testimonials, but don't discount the comments made to your customer service staff.

If you are recording your customers' telephone conversations ("for training purposes" only, of course), you will likely discover a treasure trove of kudos and props. Simply contact those customers again and ask for permission to use their comments as testimonials while offering them a thank-you gift or discount.

The policy of providing incentives for testimonials can bear considerable fruit in the video arena as well. Now that anyone with a webcam, decent camera or cell phone can record a video, many of your customers may jump at the opportunity to broadcast their opinions on your website.

The incentive you provide should be substantial enough to trigger response, but not so lucrative that you are giving the impression you are paying for testimonials. Your prospects will respect the testimonial only if they believe that it is honest and essentially uncompensated.

### **Lead the way**

The most successful testimonial results are provided by open-ended leading questions, such as:

- How did you first locate us?
- Why did you seek us out?
- Did you have any uncertainty or misgivings?
- How was your overall experience?

- What issue did our product or service solve for you?
- To whom would you recommend us?
- What is the most important thing people should know about us?
- How would you rate us?

Those questions cannot be answered by a Yes or No and are constructed to elicit a particular type of response. Whoever is answering those questions will feel compelled to discuss your brand to a greater extent, and likely in a favourable light.

### **Keep it brief**

Although most users will give an email, website, or other online display the benefit of approximately six seconds to capture their attention before they tune out and head elsewhere, Dr. Gitte Lindgaard at Carleton University in Ottawa has determined that a person can make an approximate determination about the visual appeal of a page in about one-twentieth of a second.

The caveat is that the testimonial has to be powerful and must get to the point at lightning speed: No loquacious rambling allowed. There are no hard-and-fast rules, but if you can edit the testimonial down to **35 or fewer strongly indicative words**, you should fall within the limit of the average attention span.

Testimonial videos are also subject to attention limitations. The online generation was brought up on the 30-second commercial, thus they apply that guideline to the videos they view.

Unless there is considerable action or an interesting sequential demonstration, a talking head extolling the virtues of your brand will start losing viewers at the half-minute mark, and precious few spectators will be left at the end of the first minute.

### **Seal the deal**

The essence of a testimonial is the acknowledgment of a unique experience. "I ordered it, I paid for it, I got it three days later" is not unique. There has to be an exceptional element that will convince consumers to want to emulate the testifier's experience.

As long as customers providing the testimonials are aware that their submission is subject to editing, feel free to distill their statement to the nucleus of greatest impact.

In testimonials, as in stand-up comedy, it's imperative to get to the punch line, so boil down the testimonial to its most powerful and "punchy" part: What was it about a particular customer's experience that will impress the general audience? Was it customer service over and above the call of duty? Was it a fast and hassle-free returns policy? Was it a particular quality of the product or service that stood high above the competition?

It is imperative to keep the testimonial balanced and believable so that it does not veer over the line between effectiveness and hype. You also do not want to run foul of legal regulations.

The authority of testimonials is a powerful advertising tool. Harness it astutely and glean considerable benefits.

Reference: Marketing Profs- Hal Licino

## Tip 5: Your four profiles

### Your "elevator pitch" or business networking profile

#### Overview

The point of an elevator pitch isn't to get into every detail of your solution. Instead, all you want to do - and all you have time to do - is to make sure the audience understands what you are talking about and what's in it for them.

#### Just get a conversation started

One reason why so many people deliver completely ineffective elevator pitches is they don't understand the purpose of an elevator pitch. They act like the purpose of an elevator pitch is to close the deal while in truth the purpose of an elevator pitch is simply to interest the audience in continuing to talk.

The "elevator pitch" is one of the more controversial aspects of business promotion. British business culture has always been uncomfortable with this American form of blowing one's own trumpet, perceiving it as insincere, shallow and opportunistic.

However, over the last few years, a growing number of UK-based businesses, both large and small, have made the elevator pitch an integral part of their business culture, with outstanding results.

#### So what is the elevator pitch?

Imagine the scene; you meet someone for the first time who could be a potential customer, introducer, referrer, networker or supplier.

You therefore want to engage them in such a way that they will want to find out more about your business and any potential opportunities you may present to them.



The problem is that you have typically 30-60 seconds to convince them that you are worth a closer look. You need to give them your "elevator pitch" - a short, succinct overview that captures their interest and encourages them to continue a dialogue.

The phrase originates from the US where popular business culture recognises that meeting people by chance - say, in a lift - still presents potential opportunities for business.

However, when meeting in passing, where the only opportunity available is the time it takes to travel from one floor to another, it is vital to make the introduction quickly and effectively.

### **What makes a good elevator pitch?**

There are numerous different styles and formats of elevator pitch, but what they all tend to have in common is that they are clear, succinct statements about the business that aim to make the listener interested enough to continue talking there and then, or commit to following up at some time.

Good elevator pitches are typically a short statement of who you are, what you do, and how your goods or services can offer value to customers.

In line with sound marketing principles, the key to producing a good elevator speech is to remember not to sell the product or service, but to focus on the benefit to the customer.

### **A sample pitch**

Here's how it's done:

"Hello. My name is Robert Simmons, and I am a director of Leverage Publishing. We specialise in online marketing materials and systems designed to help opticians, dentists and small businesses in the health sector become more successful. Our best-selling package, 'More Clients', typically increases client numbers by over 25 per cent within three months and was awarded the Silver Star for support services in this year's Optician News awards."

Remember, make it brief, informative and powerful, and don't be afraid to continually work on improving it. Very rarely will a successful script be written straight off without tweaking over time.

### **A good networking pitch is even briefer.**

Hello, I'm Faye Smith. I love blowing other people's trumpets for a living at Keep your Fork, my marketing and training consultancy. I also get a huge buzz from the voluntary enterprise mentoring in schools because I love inspiring young people/ breed gerbils/ have a secret fascination with our vanishing 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture.... or whatever!

## Profile Builder Template

**'This is your profile'** - your chance to produce the written equivalent of the old "This is your life" show, with Michael Aspel's red book and blasts-from-the-past guests.

The aim of this profile is to produce around two to three sides of A4 telling the main elements of your life story in such a way that it will excite and interest press and magazine journalists and radio producers. We will then create a one page version to send out proactively.

Marketing is all about the power of the story- it is that which connects us to others emotionally.

1. Please say a bit about your childhood: your name and age now, when and where you were born, where you grew up, your family and any significant memories/ defining moments of your family life and childhood.
2. Now your education and career path from first job to the present...
3. Please tell us a bit about your business and why you do what you do.
4. If you've not mentioned them already, what moments in your life are you most proud of?
5. And what would you change if you could?
6. Are there moments on which your life significantly changed direction, eg death of a loved one, a health scare, a "big birthday"?
7. Do you have any funny, quirky or unique "claims to fame"?
8. Who are the people who you admire and/or who have influenced you?
9. Aside from work, what other interests, hobbies and passions do you have?
10. Do you have any remaining ambitions?

Here are a couple of examples of a short, medium and long profile to inspire you as you write yours.

**Georgia Hall – Director, Bounce Busters and Underground Fitness**

Contact [Georgia@bounce-busters.co.uk](mailto:Georgia@bounce-busters.co.uk) 07789 266306

[www.bounce-busters.co.uk](http://www.bounce-busters.co.uk)



## Georgia Hall profile

Georgia Hall, now 46, was born to Sheffield students in a one bed roomed flat. Two years later her brother arrived, by which time drink had taken over her mum's life. For Georgia's dad, the pressures of looking after his two small children and his alcoholic wife while holding down several jobs became too much for him and he left. Georgia was 3, her brother 1.

Georgia has very few recollections of a time of being looked after as a child. She was the one *looking after*. Neglect and abuse meant the NSPCC were regular visitors. Her hot dinners every day came from school.

From leaving school at 16 to getting pregnant with her first child, she suffered anorexia and bulimia while she struggled with her inner demons... her choice of husband could have been better. The divorce was already written once counselling started, the death of one of her twins being the final nail in the coffin.

Georgia has re-trained as a personal trainer and sports massage therapist, all whilst being a mum with little support. Support came in her second marriage since when she has re-educated herself and got her CertEd.

She set up Bounce-Busters, already a successful e-commerce business that sells only the very best sports bras 15 months ago. In April, she will open the doors of Underground Fitness, where she can practise all her skills under one roof: sports therapy, pilates, exercise classes and personal training. Could she get financial backing? No, the banks weren't lending. Did she give up? No, she fought like a tiger for what she is passionate about and put her house on the line. This shows her true grit, determination and belief that this is the right thing to do, for herself, her children and her families' future.

youth**can**achieve



## Nikki Sharpe Profile

**Nikki Sharpe is a personal injuries lawyer and founder of social enterprise Youth Can Achieve. Recently, she was also named national “Extraordinary Woman of the Year 2010.”**

When Nikki tells her story, it is so compelling, people have to listen - and young people are challenged to make changes and take action. Nikki may now be a high profile personal injuries lawyer, but she can empathise in a very special way with those she has vowed to help. She has suffered so many disadvantages in her life, Nikki makes people realise that if *she* can achieve against the odds, then so could they.

Abandoned at a few weeks old by her mother, taken into care only to be terribly neglected and physically abused. Returned by social workers to a children’s home, an adoption that turned sour and bullied just because of the colour of her skin. A childhood spent hearing and believing that she was worthless and would never amount to anything.

Nikki left school with a few CSEs but determined to pull herself together, she took a secretarial course, then left home at 16 with £10 in her pocket, some clothes and a quilt to live with her adoptive sister in Manchester.

A job as a filing clerk with law firm Thompson's followed and when the firm opened an office in Sheffield, Nikki moved to the city as a copy typist. Happy in her work, Nikki started to tackle the problems of her past, seeking counselling and also her real parents and half-sister. Discovering and forgiving her parents gave her both understanding and closure.

As she got more involved with legal work, she realised she did have a burning ambition after all - to help other people. It fuelled her to push for promotion and eventually to reach for the thing she had never dared to dream of - becoming a solicitor. Thompson's took a chance on supporting Nikki through a gruelling five years of part time study and a year off work to complete her final qualifications at Sheffield University.

Working with the police a couple of years ago to help vulnerable and marginalised young people

turn their lives round was the inspiration behind Youth Can Achieve. She realised she wanted to help youngsters overcome the hardships life can deal them and is now on a mission to boost the confidence and dreams of every young person she can reach out to. Nikki shows them how they can take charge of their lives and build a better future, no matter how desperate their situation and she'll leave no stone unturned in order to succeed!

She has created a social enterprise which holds out a helping hand to young people who need it using a holistic approach. Youth Can Achieve exists to help disadvantaged and disaffected, vulnerable 10 to 30 year-olds with practical support, knowledge and information to nurture ambition and inspire positive life change.

Nikki is now a regular speaker in the media, schools and for the police. She hosts her own weekly inspiration show on local radio and mentors the hardest to reach young people in care, work for which Nikki was invited to 10 Downing Street to meet Sarah Brown.

Featured several times on TV for the Big Sleep Out and her Extraordinary Women Award, Nikki champions issues surrounding child poverty at a national level and locally is a member of the Sheffield Runaway Action Group. Only recently, Nikki became Sheffield's "Best Investor in Children" at a glittering awards ceremony, was shortlisted for Yorkshire Woman of Achievement in Education and became a national advocate and speaker for the NSPCC.

For more information about becoming involved with Youth Can Achieve as a mentor, speaker or sponsor, please **contact founder Nikki Sharpe, associate solicitor at Thompsons' Solicitors**  
**Direct dial: 0114 270 3311 Mobile: 07980 239 061.**  
**E-mail: [NikkiSharpe@Thompsons.law.co.uk](mailto:NikkiSharpe@Thompsons.law.co.uk)**



## **Sarah Blackwell- Founder and Director of Forest Schools & Archimedes Training: Profile**

Sarah (45) was born in Ince, Cheshire and adopted at six weeks old. Her adoptive family moved first from Sheffield on to Leeds and moved again to Bristol when she was four to eighteen. Sarah hated school, running away for the first time at just six years old. She remembers thinking The Osmonds were going to come and pick her up - in their helicopter of course - only her dad, headmaster and a policeman came before they arrived...

An interesting but dysfunctional childhood left Sarah a very confused child. She started being very naughty to gain the love and attention she felt she lacked and seemed to spend most of her primary school years outside the headmaster's office. "This culminated in an incident at ten when I stabbed another girl. I was always trying to be special and started carrying a penknife to make me feel stronger. I had few friends and did not really know how to make successful relationships. My home life was very much 'children should be seen but not heard' and conforming to constraints of adults, as opposed to being free to be a child. Emotions were frowned upon and any displays of highs or lows were greatly discouraged."

At eleven, Sarah had to live her parents', not *her*, dream of going to a private, all girls secondary school. She recalls scraping in to the school which was 'very posh', and caused her to live with the crushing agony of wearing red school uniform *every* day.

"I struggled with friendships, making sense of the world around me. I ran away on a number of occasions, because I felt completely disempowered, hopeless. I became anorexic at twelve, and made up illnesses so I could stay off from school, I guess to get attention and love from my mum, but this did not help. I physically self harmed from fourteen and attempted suicide for the first time at fifteen because I did not know how to successfully ask for help to cope with the emotions I was experiencing - I felt totally alone in the world."

She left home legitimately at the age of eighteen and one day old, taking a job as a residential social worker in North Devon. "Poor kids!", she laughs. "The Residential School owner called Roger Burland had set up his own residential school for *maladjusted* kids, and he really influenced my life. I worked on the farm, milked cows, caught sheep, helped with hay making, then met a group of local hippies and left my job."

Sarah and six others then embarked on a bus journey around Europe where she met her husband. "I learnt to juggle and eat fire in a cave in Germany, met some amazing people and wanted to travel for ever, that bus was the first place I felt safe. I came back to Devon, got pregnant, got married with the disdain and disapproval of my parents...my dad got very, very drunk at my wedding!"

I had my first son, Joe in my Devon longhouse in Goodleigh. The NHS threatened to sue me for endangering the life of my son. Women were not allowed home births back then."

Sarah set up her first business as a seamstress on £40 week, working back at the school I had left and selling second hand clothing and home made clothes, curtains and bags at festivals and the local market in Barnstaple. She worked at Glastonbury and other festivals in the area, helping with the showers and sauna, then went back to Europe for a while in a Leyland FG, an old British Rail transport carrier, when Joe was about nine months old.

We came back to Sheffield for Christmas to be with my husband's family. His dad had died just before I had met him. That was in 1986, and we only came for six weeks! It's quite ironic that I ended up back at the beginning, in a city I first came to at 6 weeks old."

While Sarah was still selling clothing at festivals, she set up a company providing corporate events and summer play schemes around the country, juggling, unicycling and fire eating, which turned out to be very lucrative. She even won the talent competition on a family Butlin's holiday for blowing fire and laying on glass! During this time, she was also working in an Old People's home before she had second son Aaron. "I had to move out of the bus as the NHS would not condone having a baby *in* the bus, except the midwife got stuck in traffic, so my husband delivered our son- we got quite famous in the midwifery community for that!"

With two young boys to look after, Sarah took on a short term role as a professional childminder, but increasingly came to realise that something was not right with Aaron's development. At the age of five, Aaron was finally diagnosed as being autistic, which Sarah found very challenging. despite being supported by her husband's family.

Sarah continued working and setting up playschemes with children learning circus skills. The development opportunities the children took part in enabled many to feel happy and restored a sense of self worth.

"I'd had my daughter Elly, was now working in a day centre for people with learning difficulties, moved jobs to an outdoor centre, then the strain of spending five years thinking Aaron's behaviour was all my fault and the constant juggling finished my marriage off."

After the split up from her husband, Sarah left her job and enrolled at Sheffield College. Her lecturer influenced her so much, she became an outdoor instructor: climbing, caving, canoeing and mountain leader, then went on to university to study countryside recreation management at Sheffield Hallam and gained a BSc.

During this time she was also working part time commuting to Stockport as an outdoor development officer, helping to develop an expedition programme at the same time. At five months pregnant, Sarah decided to cycle across Portugal and as she entered her final year at university, her son Euan was just ten days old. She got a first. "He was either tucked up my jumper, or I had a nanny sitting outside the lectures so I could feed him throughout the day. Euan came to graduation, but spent that night at the Children's Hospital on oxygen as he suffered from asthma."



Her next steps were to prove foundational to her life's work- Forest Schools. "I did my PGCE in Business Education, then worked at Thornbridge, the outdoor activity education centre for a year. I went to visit a Forest School in Oxford and was trained by (an amazing guy called Gordon Woodall, who inspired me to leave and set up my own company, Archimedes Training, developing and delivering Forest School training programmes since 2001."

In June 2008, Sarah set up Archimedes Social Forestry. Until recently, Sarah was renting part of the Sheffield City Council sawmill site to run her Dangerous Adventure clubs, holiday clubs and parties together with her daughter Elly. Elly, one of a handful of elite UK trampolinists, has just moved to study business and management at The University of Cardiff and is looking into setting up Dangerous Adventure Club franchises, starting in Wales.

Sarah is justifiably proud of all her children. Joe is now 25 and runs his own clothing business by Devonshire Green in the city centre, regularly making visits to China and Thailand to source stock. Aaron is 23, has recently left Freeman College and is living semi-independently with a personal assistant working at Lane End Farm, a charity which helps young people where he is training a sheep dog called Layla. Elly, 19, is at Cardiff University studying business and management and her youngest, Euan 12 has just moved to his local secondary school.

Sarah concludes, "It has been a difficult and painful journey at times, but I am at the stage now, when in my forties I can see how looking back, all these pieces have come together like a jigsaw. While at the time some of the obstacles I have faced have seemed insurmountable, I can now see that each of them has in its own way, however impossible it seemed at the time, provided a platform and a route to where I am now.

The one thing I love above all in my role as lead trainer and director of Archimedes Training delivering Forest School across the country and now developing internationally.

My hopes and desires are that I get to help other people, young and old, many like me who have faced difficulties and battles in their own lives, to enable them to know they can move on through the training and become the people they want to be. What they gain are national qualifications and the ability to train others in life changing techniques, but in the process their own lives are also being changed."

Sarah has a BSc in Countryside Recreation Management, a PGCE and is licensed to teach outdoor education to national qualification level 5 by the Open College Network. She speaks at national and international conferences on Forest School ethos, children's development in the outdoors, outdoor learning and now Beach Schools.

She has appeared in the local press and is a regular contributor to BBC Radio Sheffield on subjects as varied as national media stories, self harming, runaways, anorexia and teen suicide.

Her new series on Forest Schools is running in Nursery World magazine and she has written for Horizons and Living Woods magazines. Internationally, Sarah has written for an Australian early years magazine and commences Forest Schools Training there in 2011 She is currently writing her first book called "Forest Schools - the essential guide."

Sarah can be contacted at Forest Schools on **0114 2855534** or mobile **07957 496161**  
[www.forestschools.com](http://www.forestschools.com) [www.social-forestry.co.uk](http://www.social-forestry.co.uk)



## Tip 10: LIVE your brand!

*"You never get a second chance to make a first impression" ...in 11 seconds?*

**Make instant impact** by being in good...

**S**  
**H**  
**A**  
**P**  
**E**

### **Establish empathy**

People will generally not tell you things that matter until there has been some empathy established; until they feel they know you and you understand them.

There are many things that establish common ground and create empathy between people, for example:

- Arrive early
- Appropriate small talk (and topics to avoid!) such as:
  - Open questions such as:
    - Who?
    - What?
    - Where?
    - When?
    - Why?
    - How?
  - Deliberately using 'I', 'you', or 'we' statements
  - Self-disclosure
  - Demonstrating knowledge of their business

- Compliments
- Using their name
- Using their jargon and abbreviations

## **Behaviour**

- How do I show empathy?
- How quickly and well do I return emails & calls?
- Am I approachable?
- Do I do what I have promised?
- Do I help people spontaneously
- Does my behaviour fit my values?

*From 'Brand You' Perkins & Royston-Lee*

## Seven top tips to build your personal brand

- Become an invaluable asset- expertise
- Position yourself as the go-to person for specific skills
- Build social equity- be a connector
- Build contact lists
- Be a content producer, not just consumer
- Collect endorsements
- Be readily available

## Press releases



*Jane Fardon*  
shinethrough

*Cracking quality, lively photo, approx half meg res, possibly company logo. I like to put this at the top in small file format as well as attach because it shows the journalist what they are getting in image and story and they don't need the inconvenience of opening two files.*

## NEWS RELEASE

*Heading in bold- not just press, release to radio too*

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### **Masters of all they style-vey!**

*Catchy headline*

Jane Fardon and Jane Chapman, partners in True Colours, Sheffield's leading image consultancy, have just been awarded the title 'Master of the International Federation of Image Consultants'.

*Introductory paragraph summarizing whole story for journalist and reader*

Jane Fardon said, "We are absolutely elated to join a small handful of less than fifty Masters in the entire world. It has been such hard work over the past eighteen months and so intensive, at times Jane and I were tempted to give up, but it has been well worth it!"

*Each paragraph must now include essential facts: The 4 Ws and the H*

*Who- is the story about*

*What- is happening?*

*Where- is the event etc going on*

*When- is it taking place*

*Why- will anyone be interested (crucial key- sell on benefits to them)*

*How- will people contact you (call to action, contact details)*

*Careful use of capitals (proper names, not titles) and NO PUFF!*

Jane Chapman agrees, "We really felt our clients deserved the best possible service available in the UK, and this was the way to ensure we were fully skilled to do that. We had to score 100% in a series of assessed consultations, and we are now completely confident we can tackle any style or image challenge men or women could throw at us!"

*Use plenty of quotes from interested parties- journalists tend to cut from the bottom of an article and leave in quotes (because it gives impression they have interviewed them!)*

Jane adds, “Our business ethos is *confidence and style - for life*, and that's what we deliver, not just quick fixes! Our experience ranges from corporate master-classes, wardrobe reviews and personal shopping to group workshops in locations as diverse as businesses, home-school associations and charities. We also offer individual and small group colour and style consultations, make up lessons or hair styling at our welcoming studio and hair salon in Broomhill.”

**To find out more about True Colours services, contact the Janes at the studio on**

**0114 2997898 [www.truecoloursforlife.co.uk](http://www.truecoloursforlife.co.uk)**

*Finish with a clear call to action and full contact details for more information, including website*

**- ENDS-**

*Show the story has finished*

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Photos show Jane Fardon and Jane Chapman, partners in True Colours image consultancy.

*Attention-grabbing photos need to be named and attached as half meg files*

## **Notes to the Editor**

Jane Fardon (45) moved nine times before settling in Broomhill, Sheffield with hospital consultant husband Nick and their three children. She launched her own image consultancy on her move to Sheffield with partner Jane Chapman in 2006 and in 2007, she founded Jane Fardon Cosmetics together with husband Nick. In the same year, Jane Fardon Cosmetics was voted Best New Business at the annual awards of the International Federation of Image Professionals.

Jane Chapman (45) lives in Crosspool with husband Dave, an Occupational Therapist and two daughters. She worked in the civil service until having a colour consultancy with Jane Fardon in 2006 dramatically altered her career direction, and she retrained as an image consultant.

Both Janes regularly speak out on style and image matters on radio and in the press, on Sky TV and at events.

*Establish credibility with brief biography, linked to place where relevant, qualifications, media experience, specialist subject/expertise.*

**News release on behalf of True Colours Image Consultancy by Faye Smith, Keep your Fork Marketing 07985 038265**

*They can chase me instead of you in the first instance if you prefer- or they can't get hold of you!*

## Brand boosting press templates

### **THE LAST WORD- Sheffield Star Newspaper, Saturdays**

**Contact journalist Martin Smith** [martin.smith@sheffieldnewspapers.co.uk](mailto:martin.smith@sheffieldnewspapers.co.uk)

Interesting introductory paragraph about you, age, career, business, where you live, with whom, children/pets!

The last book I read

The last CD I bought

The last film I saw

The last TV I watched

The last place I visited

The last meal out

### **EXAMPLE**



### **THE Last Word- Sheffield Star**

James Pearson (42) has been involved in marketing and advertising all his working life, winning big brand clients including Lakeland, Pets at Home and Morrisons – right across the public sector, to small local businesses, law, travel and charity clients across the UK. This week he is guest speaker on the power of collaboration at Footprints Accountancy's business development workshop at Barclays.

With his passion for social media, mobile and online trends, James has just made the leap to join Redemption Media, Sheffield's leading specialist online consultancy, as business development partner

James has studied, lived and worked in Yorkshire, London and Edinburgh but has now settled in the village of Holmfirth with his life partner and one remaining much spoilt cat.

#### **The last book I read**

I'd like to say something cutting edge and intelligent, but I've always had a fascination for popular culture, so it's more likely to be a recent autobiography by Russell Brand or Dannii Minogue. I love finding out what makes the real person tick behind the personality.

Currently I'm reading Brilliant Networking by Steven D'Souza. It's re-affirming common sense, but maybe not as exciting as Russell!

### **The last CD I bought**

I love music and concerts, I'm always buying CDs, never truly embraced downloading and my attic is heaving with old vinyl. Music tastes tell you everything about a person. My latest indulgences include Rihanna, Duffy and Kings of Leon (much better since they got their hair cut). I've sneakily downloaded the new Madonna tracks though, which aren't yet remixed for sale!

### **The last film I saw**

It was Burlesque, starring Christina Aguilera and Cher (at the cinema). There's a recurring theme here. But it was very uplifting and inspiring, if not totally believable. It takes a little magic to drag you off your sofa into the cinema.

### **The last TV I watched**

New series of Shameless and Glee, both starting at the same time on C4 and E4. A dilemma!

### **The last place I visited**

During the property boom, we invested wisely in a small villa in an historic area of The Mani, Greece, famous for its fantastic Kalamata olives. With an eagle eye view of the coast it's the perfect escape from our busy working life.

### **The last meal out**

There's so many fantastic little restaurants with bags of atmosphere in Holmfirth to tempt us. We recently sampled an amazing veggie paella from Carniceria's.

There are many other press and magazine templates you can use to build your brand:

Yorkshire post - On the Spot

Sheffield Star – 20 Questions, Last Word, Me and My Car, How green is my Company

Sheffield Telegraph - Food for Thought, Favourite Things

Profile Magazine – My Top 10

Plus- letters to the editor, Viewpoint, columns, women/business features, top tips, food, Today's Woman, new appointments, people....

## **Brand Boosting recommended reading!**

Brand You: Turn your unique talents into a winning formula – Purkiss & Royston-Lee

The Brand You 50 - Tom Peters

Build a Brand in 30 Days – Simon Middleton

The Go-Giver and Go-Givers Sell More – Burg & Mann

Do Your Own PR & Get Noticed - both by Paula Gardner

Networking: The Art of Making Friends - Carole Stone

The Definitive Book of Body Language – Alan & Barbara Pease

## Believe in yourself, even when no-one else does

Remember the four minute mile? People have been trying to achieve it since the days of the ancient Greeks. In fact, folklore has it that the Greeks had lions chase the runners, thinking that would make them run faster. They also tried tigers' milk- not the stuff you get down at health food stores, but the real thing. Nothing worked, so they decided it was impossible. And for thousands of years, everyone believed it. It was physiologically impossible for a human being to run a mile in under four minutes. Our bone structure was all wrong, wind resistance too great, inadequate lung power. There were a million reasons.

Then one man, one single human being, proved that the doctors, the trainers, the athletes and the millions and millions before him who tried and failed were all wrong. And miracle of miracles, the year after Roger Bannister broke the four minute mile, *thirty seven* other runners broke the four minute mile, and the year after that, *three hundred* runners broke the four minute mile.

Today you can watch a race where *all* the runners finish in under four minutes. In other words, the runner who finished dead last would have been regarded as having accomplished the impossible a few decades ago.

What happened? There were no great breakthroughs in training. Human bone structure didn't suddenly improve. But human *attitudes* did.

Think about the stone cutter. He hammers at his rock a hundred times without denting it. On the hundred and first blow, the rock will split in two. You know it is not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before. You *can* accomplish your goals, if you set them. Who says you're not tougher, smarter, better, harder working, more able than others? It doesn't matter if *others* say you can't do it. What matters, and the only thing that matters, is if *you* say it! Until Bannister came along, we all believed in the experts. Bannister believed in himself and changed the world. If you believe in yourself, well then, there's *nothing* you can't accomplish. So don't quit...

**...don't ever quit!**

**Excerpt taken from Harvey Mackay's book "How to swim with the sharks, without being eaten alive."**



## Brand Booster @ Hallam

**Keep your Fork** may like to use your comments in our literature.

**For marketing purposes, please add your first or full name if you are happy to do so**

.....

- (1) The three words which best describe this workshop are.....
- (2) What I enjoyed most about the session was.....
- (3) What I enjoyed least about the session was.....
- (4) I would describe the presenter as.....
- (5) The points that I expect to be most useful were.....
- (6) The changes I'm going to make are.....
- (7) I'd have liked to hear more about.....
- (8) In comparison with the other workshops, I'd say this one was....
- (9) I'd recommend other Hatchery graduates should/ should not get to hear this.
- (10) They should get longer/ same/ shorter than us.
- (11) **Overall**, I'd give it      /10
- (12) Before this workshop, I'd say I felt.....% (insert **number of percent**) prepared to build my personal and business brand. Afterwards, I felt .....% prepared.

Thanks for listening. Every blessing in life!