



BEYOND THE CV

YOU MAY HAVE UPDATED YOUR RESUME, BUT DO YOUR CV AND YOUR IMAGE MATCH? IT MAY BE TIME FOR A MAKEOVER, SAYS JOANNA HUGHES

THERE was a time when the trendiest thing you could do with a resumé was to attach a colour photo, often of the same quality as your passport one. Now there are video presentations, documents with embedded links to your websites, a thousand and one bells and whistles.

That's great stuff, it really is. But if you get an interview or even the job, will the HR department wonder if you're the person you say you are on paper? More importantly, are you that person?

Dennis Heath is a qualified executive coach here in Singapore, one of the new breed of consultants who can help you come to terms with the things that have been holding you back, whether it's behaviour in the office or personal hygiene. It's time for a tune-up, he says: "When you're bored with your work and you've stopped learning, when you're retrenched, when you enter into a profession where image is important, when a friend point out something about your looks or behaviour that is holding back your career."

Of course, nobody wants to be told these things – that's why there are professionals who carry out personality assessments, or the so-called 360 degree exercises that Dennis says "can give you a slap round the face of reality and make you take stock of your attitudes to work and others. Few people know who they really are without the help of third-party input."

There are no shortcuts – and it isn't painless. "Some people will reject the feedback and defend their behaviour, no matter how obstructive a negative behaviour might be to their progress and development in work and life," says Dennis. And it's definitely

not a DIY project. "People rarely change in the long term by reading a book. Self-help books sell millions of copies but very few people make dramatic changes after reading a book. For sustained change you need a long term relationship with a coach or mentor to act as your conscience and ensure that you take action to change rather than just think about it. A plan or thinking about changing is useless unless followed by concrete action."

Once you've discovered – however unwillingly – what you have to change and have decided how to make those changes, you'll begin the process of re-branding yourself. Says Dennis: "You project your personality by your behaviour towards other people. We judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behaviour. By modifying your behaviour you can change people's perception of you. You will be judged by others first by the way you present yourself physically. Beyond the first physical impression people will judge you largely by the way you communicate. Communication includes language, body language, tonality, listening skills, confidence, eye contact and facial expressions. One of the most common skills I find myself working on with my coaching clients is listening skills. Most of us hear without a problem but very few of us truly listen."

And of course, the new you may come as a surprise to some; the altered behaviour may feel fake. "Changing a behaviour that's been a habit for decades can be uncomfortable and awkward at first," says Dennis. "But behavioural changes tend to stick once people recognise they are getting better results from the change. Once the new behaviour becomes a habit you

could say it has become part of the new persona. However, some personality traits are hard-wired from birth. These are underlying traits that never change, only our ability to recognise and compensate for them (or leverage them) in certain situations changes.”

And hard as it is to admit, for example, that shouting at staff in meetings is not the best way to handle the situation, you should let your colleagues know that you are trying to change your ways. “If colleagues don’t know you’re making an effort to change or why, they could be perplexed and unsettled by what they see. In the corporate environment when you are undergoing a behavioural makeover it’s best to let colleagues know what’s happening and elicit their feedback on the changes you are trying to make. This is not always easy for Asians as some may see asking for feedback on their performance as losing face, particularly if subordinates are being asked to provide feedback.”

All of this is remarkably similar to the branding of a product, such as a Louis Vuitton bag. Says Dennis, “It’s similar in that all these qualities are what people are buying emotionally when they employ you, in the same way that people often emotionally equate high quality with certain brand names. But in order for a positive brand image to stick the quality and behaviours experienced by colleagues must be consistent and authentic.”

You can’t do it alone; you need someone who is honest and supportive to give you the feedback you need. At the same time, you have to want the change. Dennis suggests that the way you frame your motivation can help you follow through with the changes: “For example if, ‘I want to stop smoking because I know it’s bad for me’ is not a compelling reason to give up, perhaps ‘I love my family and want to live long



DENNIS HEATH

enough to play with my grandchildren’ is. Coaching, or at a deeper level hypnotherapy can help with re-framing and embedding a compelling reason to change in someone’s psyche. ■