

BRAND HEROES

find the one that works for your business

vol. 01

Klementyna de Sternberg Stojalowska

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INTRODUCTION

WE HOLD THE KEYS TO OUR BRANDS' SUPERPOWERS

We go into business to do what we want to do. What we love, what we believe in. To create value and to find clients that resonate with our values.

It all starts from us – it all begins from you.

You and your personal brand as a founder are the seeds of your business brand. The two need to be aligned. Otherwise, the chances for success are undermined. When personal brand and business brand are synchronised, you get the Holy Grail, the Fountain of Life, the Force, the cold fusion – you harness the power of the universe.

Choose your favourite metaphor or, better still, add your own.

When this happens, your business elevates your personal brand and your personal brand fuels the business. You build and nurture networks, find clients, inspire teams and engage business partners. They are drawn to you. I have seen it. The signs are so very much visible, if you know what to look for.

I find business networking meetings a great testing ground and I use a simple enough test to see if a brand hero stands before me or if I am talking to someone whose powers are yet to be awakened.

My brand hero test question is simple: “So, *what do you do?*”

I will hazard a guess that you have asked that question yourself and have been asked yourself as well. The answer may be simple but the manner in which people answer it, tells all. There are so many ways to say “*I am an accountant / a lawyer / a dentist / a graphic designer*”. What I always hope to hear is “*I am THE accountant / lawyer / dentist / graphic designer for [specific issue] of [specific type of person]*”. And I hope to see them light up. To hear words coming easily and to see a smile reaching their eyes. I encourage you to try it next time during such a meeting. It is a very interesting experiment to observe how

people react to such a basic question about their profession. If you meet a person whose personal and business brands are aligned, you will hear their heart sing.

You can tell that with their talent they can conquer the world. They are heroes within their niche. And you believe them.

Have you ever met someone just like it?

When you do, do you think to yourself *“I wish I was like that, it would be great if I had it in me”*?

Please do not panic if I tell you that you **do** have it in you.

You do

We so often think that the grass is greener on the other side. I know I sometimes do.

I noticed that in those moments it is so easy for me to lose perspective and focus on what I am not, what I do not know yet, what I haven't done. When I look at others I notice their accomplishments with no trouble. From a distance it is so easy to see a big picture. It is easy to admire how they fulfil their potential. My brand heroes are moving so fast. In comparison, I seem to be standing still.

It is a matter of perspective and a matter of focus

My heroes were, and are, from all industries and of all sizes. Whether they are starting as solopreneurs or are an established international brand, they seem good enough to fulfil that potential and are often in absolutely THE best place to make the next step to developing and growing their brand. I think to myself *“S***t, how did they get to that place?”* I realised that if I figure this out, I will be able to find a way to get there with my business. This is why I wrote this book, to figure out what makes a brand hero tick: their thinking and their actions and how to make it happen for me.

I believe it could be of use to you, too.

Make a note of who that is, it will be useful during further ponderings.

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Whatever stage of entrepreneurial development you are at – whether you are an entrepreneur, a business owner or are still self-employed – it is OK. The stage you are at right now is the best place to make the next step towards becoming a brand hero. Never fear :)

Turn your brand thinking on

There is no point in waiting until you are bigger, better, faster, stronger, with a bigger team, with more funding, with new premises, or until next Wednesday. You are not just going to one day wake up as a brand hero, for the powers are already within you. You need a catalyst, a nudge to turn your brand thinking on and harness your powers.

Today.
Now.
Here.

This book is filled with descriptions of when and how various business and personal brands turned their brand hero thinking on; still, let me give you a quick example right now to illustrate the process.

YOUR FAVOURITE THING IN THE WORLD

I used to belong to a networking group that met on a weekly basis and each week we had a minute to introduce ourselves and one of us would have 10 minutes to present details about their business. One of the members, Nicholas Challen, was a procurement specialist, and each time he would talk about utilities and energy. Important subjects, but going through bills is hardly exciting. Once he mentioned he used to work closely with restaurants and high-end London hotels as a food supplier, and when he talked about that subject, although only for a minute, the room fell silent. That was his best 60-second presentation ever. I had known him for a year by then and that was the first time I'd heard about this aspect of his work. He just never talked about it. Yet his passion and knowledge of the subject was evident. It was full of facts, stats, recommendations and all. A joy to witness.

One other colleague from this group and I picked up on that and commented. Indeed, whenever I saw this gentleman I mentioned something about his procurement for food-related businesses. It did not happen instantly, indeed it took him another two years to really go for that niche and today he has written a book. At the time of writing, he is redoing his website and he is finally in his element. He still uses the skills that he used to apply to a wider market but now his efforts are just more focused. It is easier for him to position his business, talk about it and himself; not to mention that, being a foodie, he is even more credible. I had the pleasure of working with him on the strategy of a refreshed brand, but it is his passion and expertise that makes it work. He still works hard on developing his business and I help him develop his brand. Just now it feels right – with all brand elements in place, it is a bit easier. Nicholas was brave enough to follow his passion; we aligned his business with it and it clicked. It made him ready to elevate his business higher.

Can you think of such a person within your network? Perhaps you are one.

I believe I am.

Here's why.

You are a force and you can choose a side: the light or the dark

There are always two ways of looking at things: how to do them and how not to. For years I subscribed to the latter. This meant I was quick to classify my master's degree in Sociology as just a degree, years of advertising agency experience as a job, and the way I worked with my clients as "just my way of doing things" that I do not have to share with anyone, ever. My background is copywriting and 'creative copywriter' was my first serious job title (if you disregard a summer job in a clothes shop). I learned on the job; I started with straplines and headlines, then moved on to whole articles, then learned how to work with a creative brief to generate ideas for campaigns (radio, TV, big name magazines, you name it...) and was a member of a team that actually delivered them as well. The agency I worked for had a wide selection of clients and I learned how to develop campaigns with both local and national reach, for

new brands and established ones. First of all, we always approached businesses as brands, and that thinking stuck with me, although I did not realise it at the time. To me it was just the way I did things. So, when I moved to the UK and started on my own – first as a freelance copywriter, then self-employed – I continued to think about each and every business I encountered as a brand. I then noticed that businesses do not necessarily think about themselves as such. Still, even for purely copywriting assignments, I applied my branding methodology. If you want to deliver effective copy, you need to know what your client is trying to say, right? So I would spend two or three days analysing their existing collateral materials (if they had any), studying their competitors, examining target audience, defining tone of voice, discussing my client's past and their business's future, and then I would proudly present a piece of copy, keeping all that research for myself. That was just how I did things.

So, yes, there are two ways of looking at things: how to do them and how not to. Both require effort, so focus on the one that may benefit you most. If you are not doing it yet, you can begin today.

This book is a sort of *thank you* to brand heroes who helped me realise that. Now it is my turn.

BRAND HERO PROFILE

A brand hero is a model of features and characteristics, which I formed during my experience and through working with clients in various markets, countries and specialisations. You may compare it with personality types, where readers identify their own temperaments as being of a certain disposition (introvert or extravert, blue or yellow, etc.). Similarly, some brand heroes' traits are more prominent. I identified 10 main distinct elements that make up my brand hero model. It is a theoretical concept but one I distilled from interactions with real people on my professional journey. (I define them below, and at the end of the book you will find all 10 traits analysed in context of specific case studies.)

For me, a brand hero is an entrepreneur – one who organises resources and benefits from their exploitation – who wants to change the world and leaves their mark on it with their beliefs and actions. They are creating their own brand space around them. An

Well, it took an external perspective to point out that 'my way' is actually my methodology; a process that I could open up to my clients to serve them better. This remark prompted an evolution of my thinking. It took a while to pluck up courage to start talking about 'my way', but I said it and made it happen. It also took a while for me to rework the way I approached my experience. I analysed my education, experience and heritage, and decided to look at my Polish background as international experience, my master's degree in Sociology as training in catching trends, and my English (a second language) as a skill making me even more sensitive to how people use the language and their cultural preferences. I learned how to appreciate my background and worked out how each element of my personality and experience complements my brand.

area where ideals lead to good practices and inspire people/others to do better; both internally, within the organisation, and externally, through inspiring, educating, entertaining, and stimulating consumer choices that enrich experiences and lives.

Brand hero thinking is not limited to price, product, service and fame. Brand heroes are thinking about ecosystems, strategies and a better future – they remember about the world without forgetting about themselves. When they are young (in a business experience sense of the word) they often feel overwhelmed by what is possible. Yet, they see the growing scope of possibilities and they act despite the fear. The feeling of stepping out of their comfort zone is often present – especially when they consider their mission and vision. The more they think about it, the more it seems like a set of logical steps rather than elements of unachievable greatness someone else, someone bigger, better, wealthier, is destined to.

Here I am presenting my brand hero thesis: archetypical elements that this construct holds:

1. Brand heroes inspire culture

We have only just met and I would like to put your mind at ease: you will find only a handful of references throughout this book, to ground it, but keep it light enough to read with pleasure.

Deal and Kennedy¹ describe organisational culture as “*The way we do things here*”. Schein somewhat elaborates on it, comparing culture to a living organism born at the moment the enterprise begins; that organism grows on founders’ “*ways of doing things*”.² This is how I understand culture as well; alignment of values and beliefs contributing to an environment promoting constructive behaviours, experiences, challenges and lessons.

I noticed that brand heroes, even if they are not using the word *culture*, create environments inspiring people to do their best. They attract talent, aspiration and emotion that propel their brand to greater heights. They inspire people – whether a client, a team member or strategic business partner – to be better, because they feel a part of the brand. They feel this brand is, to some extent, their own, a part of their persona.

1 Deal T. and Kennedy A. (1984) Corporate Cultures. in: Wilson F. (2004) Chapter 11: Culture. In: Organizational Behaviour and Work: A Critical Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2 Schein E. H. (1983) ‘The role of the founder in creation of organizational culture’ in Organizational Dynamics, Summer 1983

2. Brand heroes stand proudly next to their logo

Brand heroes do not hide behind signs and straplines. Sharing their thoughts, both on professional and private matters (in an elegant way), seems to be a characteristic of a brand hero. They are not ashamed of their human element and that brings them closer to their audience. They teach by showing how things can be done and what can be achieved. They are past theory and well within the realm of practice. They will gladly tell you what they know and by looking at them and at their achievements, you can easily see they practise what they preach. In any case, practice comes first. And the logo is the emblem of that ethos, a symbol of those values and beliefs – an introduction to and indication of what hides beneath.

3. Brand heroes know how to learn from mistakes

Brand heroes do make mistakes and that does not stop them. It makes them evolve. They own their mistakes. They make the most of those mistakes and use them as lessons, as tools to improve their brands.

In many cases you can read about their less-than-perfect experiences in their blogs, vlogs and white papers. Error is a partner of endeavour and they are extremely active in trying new things out, so sharing both types of experiences – success and failure – becomes typical of their journey.

Nothing to be ashamed of; simply a part of another day in the life of a growing brand.

Brand heroes recognise that mistakes can help them make better decisions later. They can see that mistakes are inevitable and integral to being innovative and forward thinking. They also display the desire to spot them and fix them as soon as possible (hence they have a tendency to systemise, measure and evaluate). Mistakes are not seen as a bad thing, rather as an outcome – an outcome that highlights areas for improvement.

I so admire brands that welcome mistakes and even rejoice when they notice what can be advanced. No fear, no reservations – just motivation for action for there is something good to be done.

4. Brand heroes are open to knowledge

Brand heroes never stop learning: from experience, mistakes,

"To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often."
Winston Churchill

If you would like to know where this quote comes from, you can find here: Winston Churchill, 'His complete speeches, 1897–1963', edited by Robert Rhodes James, Chelsea House ed., vol. 4 (1922–1928), p. 3706. Lors d'un débat avec Philipp Snowden, chancelier de l'Echiquier, à propos des droits de douane sur la soie.

each other. Personal development of the leader/creator is every bit as important as personal development of each member of the team. They are not afraid of hiring and working with people that are experts – they look forward to learning from people who know more. They appreciate knowledge as a tool to amplify their brands' influence and that approach permeates through all elements of the brand and embraces every member of the team.

5. Brand heroes are sanely passionate about what they do

Brand heroes' passion springs from their beliefs and is fuelled by unyielding determination to do what is right, not necessarily what is easy.

They are extremely knowledgeable about their industries; they are true experts, lucid about current trends and the context of their existence, as well as aware of what else there is to be done. They are often enviably in love with their place in the world; however, they have a deep understanding of the shortcomings of being an entrepreneur and that, if this is a bed of roses, the roses are thorny.

6. Brand heroes are purposeful

That sense of direction comes from clarity of vision and a deep understanding of mission. Irrespective of the size of their business and business maturity, brand heroes have grand goals. These plans are giving them direction and focus, the ability to judge whether they are on track without delay. They have their brand core defined and as such it gives their decision-making swiftness and makes their efforts even sharper. That's part of their creative advantage. Look for elements that resonate with your brand's personality, take notes and I hope this will help you develop your brand further.

7. Brand heroes have a firm grasp of reality

Deep understanding of where they stand in the scheme of things is another characteristic of brand heroes. Wherever they are, however small they are when they start, this is just a description of today. They need to have it to realise what steps need to be taken in order to take them to where they need to be tomorrow.

Understanding and appreciation of what they stand for, their values, what they wish to express, runs deep within their business structure and underlines their activities. Their identity may not yet be perfect, but they know what they want to express and they are working on making themselves known for all the right reasons. Their motivation is greater than money and that helps them survive the difficult start-up moments.

This also makes the relationships they develop with their clients stronger. And they invest in developing relationships with clients. They know what their clients are going through, often they have traversed similar tracks. They utilise that knowledge. They stay relevant by constantly reviewing their clients' problems and adapting their brand solutions to fit, anticipate and inspire.

8. Brand heroes have appetite for solutions they can deliver today

Creating value is the core of the activity of brand heroes; they work hard to be able to deliver their promises. They grow their presence in their categories by increasing the value of relationships with their clients, one client at a time. Good product, good service – yes, that is a given, and they think about the “*what else can we do?*” aspect. What is more, they deliver that “*what else*”. They do not stop at generating ideas. They do not shy away from bringing them to life. As such, they make a real difference to the market of “*that'll do*”. Little by little, and sometimes in big leaps, they make the world better.

9. Brand heroes champion cooperation

Brand heroes are confident of their own knowledge, and develop their intellectual property and culture. This enables them to look at other brands as potential business partners. Knowing what differentiates them in the marketplace allows them to search for and build more effective and lucrative associations, ones that allow for cross-pollination of industries, ideas and technologies. They bake a bigger pie, rather than worry about the crumbs from a smaller one, and look at complementary skills allowing them to deliver a more comprehensive solution to the client.

They usually think about cooperation, not competition. They are

aware of the technology and market trends and focus on creating their own spaces, where they lead and inspire.

10. Brand heroes grow

To me branding is a process; never complete, constantly evolving – brand heroes are also never *done*. Even those, perhaps even especially those, with international presence see themselves as brands in the making. This is a reflection of their understating of the environment and embracing its evolution. There is a desire to be a part of the change, a strong opposition to being left behind.

I see brand hero characteristics in people in enterprises in all industries and at various stages. It may surprise you, but I believe even a pre-start-up can be a brand hero. That is because I believe we are all brands, personal brands, to begin with. We become a business brand from the very second we entertain a thought of launching a business venture.

You may have guessed that I consider you, dear reader, as a brand already, and perhaps should you wish to follow this path, a brand hero in the making. I invite you to analyse your own brand with these characteristics in mind, even before you continue to read all the profiles included in this selection. You may find brands, not necessarily within your own industry, which overcame challenges you may be facing at this moment. I hope this book will inspire you to develop your brand further.

THE METHOD

This book began as a social media experiment I devised to give myself confidence to start publishing online. I had an idea to interview people I admire, individuals who are great personal brands and business brands. Some of them are changing their world locally, some nationally, a few even internationally. Whatever their reach, I was interested in what they are doing right.

Always look at the bright side of the brand

I believe that it's easy to find articles and blogs that show all the difficulties of doing business. Therefore, I wanted to show

the good, the exciting and the “*it-is-worth-overcoming*” part of entrepreneurship. I wanted to create a portrait of businesses others can feel optimistic about and shine the light at the ‘behind the scenes’ element as well.

I knew I wanted my meetings to have an atmosphere of informal conversation, but I also wanted to make sure all aspects of brand development would be covered (brand creation, naming process, mission, vision, values, market context...). The easiest way was to design a checklist. I started with main areas and then added more details.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS (purpose: to create a space for a comfortable conversation)

Getting into a zone of thinking about your own brand takes a moment and I found having a light opening section is a good way of easing into it. It helps to break the ice and set the tone of conversation. It helped me, as an interviewer, to slow down from the buzz of a busy day and to get into the mood of the conversation, and it also helped my heroes to feel a bit more comfortable with me, especially when this conversation was the first of its kind, and not all of them were used to talking about themselves and their brand in this way. The more comfortable atmosphere I was able to create, the more in-depth insights we were able to discover.

NAMING (a rose by any other name would smell as sweet... or would it?)

I was looking for rationale behind the name of the brand: was it named after the founder, the market category of the product, the product itself, the location of the business, or was it a random word or phrase? I wanted to find out what were their initial thoughts behind the name, what was it that they wanted the name to represent... in addition, I was interested in discovering if they spent much time on choosing the name – or was it just a spark of inspiration? Also, who was responsible for suggesting the name: themselves, a committee, someone else entirely, or had it perhaps been inspired by a story or a situation?

VISUAL IDENTITY (utilitarian fashion statement)

I wanted to analyse the connection between the verbal and visual identity of my heroes and how both elements influence each other:

which came first, who was involved in the process, how long did it last, do they consider it finished, were there many iterations; perhaps it grew organically and still evolves, what did they want the colours and shapes to convey, are they working with a dedicated team or overseeing the design and implementation themselves?

MISSION & VISION (the past, present and future of the brand)

This section was created to help focus the interview on the space the brand occupies in the market and to understand why they do what they do. I wanted to understand the context of the organisation and the motivations of people involved. To better grasp the ideas of the brand and its plans for the future, I investigated its past, its origins – in the hope that it would give me context of what makes them want to change the world and what (and who) inspires them to pursue their goals.

VALUES (what really matters to the brand and what makes it valuable to the client)

Often, especially in the world of start-ups and young enterprises, values of the business brand reflect personal values of the founder. I wanted to check if this is still the case with my brand heroes. And, if so, are there any similarities between them?

I wanted to see if and how their values evolve, how clearly they communicate their values and how much that communication matters to them; what role values play in commercial success and in relationship building (both internally between employees and externally between business partners and clients).

There is a lot this section reveals. It turned out to be a great way to get a peek at the inner workings of my brand heroes.

QUICK-FIRE (speak your mind)

I found that by the time we (my brand hero and I) reached this section, at least 40 minutes had passed. To keep the momentum of the conversation, I selected a group of questions to use as a very loose implicit-association test: no overthinking, just speaking your mind. It was a fun way of diving into their personality and it gave me a good taste of the inner workings of their brands. Here I asked, quite boldly, about the good and the yet-to-be-improved aspects. My brand heroes were very brave and frank. There are no wrong

answers here, although there may be a few surprising ones.

Having a questionnaire meant I had a checklist that helped me introduce the project to my heroes. I often sent them the list of questions before our meetings, so that they had a certain idea of what to expect. I conducted my interviews as casual conversations, but they were focused and of reasonable length. Thanks to the plan I knew we needed to allocate 45–60 minutes for each interview or online conference.

PEN AT THE READY

Then it was time to write. To keep myself in check and make sure I didn't deviate from the subject too much, I developed a blueprint for the articles as well (headlines with detailed questions for each section). Having that blueprint also made my writing easier (I always outline a structure for every piece of copy I produce; it speeds things up and sharpens my mind). Although I had a list of questions and recorded most of the interviews/conferences, I did not want to simply transcribe them. I do realise it made things a bit more complex as it was still important to me for the interviews to be a starting point of a more involved brand evaluation. The goal for me was to make each interview into an individual story in a certain format that makes it easier for you, my dear reader, to compare, contrast and spot trends. You will find common themes running through this book, but each piece is a distinctive, separate tale of a brand hero.

Heroic countdown begins

Initially, I called the project *90 brand heroes challenge* as I was thinking of interviewing 90 brands in 60 days and writing them up on my website – the beginning was crazy, 15 interviews in the first week! I have to say, I only managed it because of the enthusiasm of my heroes. Their response has been fantastic. Some Brand Heroes I knew personally through networking and business development courses. I pitched the idea to them via social media and email. Others I approached out of the blue – writing to them via their websites. Some I discovered along the way, for example Fistful of Spice, who I met at a food festival and simply talked to about the project. And

some of the brand heroes were introduced to me by another brand hero. This whole project allowed me to meet fantastic people – I am very grateful to them that they shared their insights and time with me.

It soon transpired that there was something bigger than just an online project brewing. Again, external perspective comes into play as I thought that this may be turned into a book, but people I interviewed began to ask if I was going to publish it in any other way than online and that seeded the idea in my mind and gave me courage to do so... and here we are.

What began as a blog turned into a tome that combines refreshed articles and their analysis. Stories included in this book were chosen to inspire and transpire my brand hero theory. You will find even more individual stories on my website, so watch this space.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

However you like, of course. I can tell you what was my structure in writing it, and you may choose to follow it.

*Dear Reader,
I encourage you to
use the book as a
workbook and put
your own thoughts
and ideas on these
pages. That's what
the slightly bigger
margins are for.*

This book is an overview of how brands come to life. It is, however, first and foremost an insight into the personalities behind these brands: their thinking, ideas, strategies, improvements, practices and plans. Please note, dear reader, this is not an academic publication – this content is analysed through my own experiences and tinted with my own personality – my own research bias. I am bringing here real-life stories of entrepreneurs who have done it and are continuing to deliver – and most of all this is my personal reflection of what I have observed and my impression of them on their journeys – and one I had immense pleasure putting together.

This book is, therefore, a compilation of brand portraits, or perhaps going as far as brand introspections. I was 'let in' and so I am now sharing with you an insider's view and my take on each of them.

While reading I encourage you to look for common themes in this book.

Turn the brand hero thinking on.

I invite you to look for elements that resonate with you and to seek different characteristics, beyond the ones I identified, that you find important and interesting. I also welcome you to share your thoughts and lessons from this book with me (you will find my contact details at the end of the book).

Business categories included in this publication are diverse, to say the least. The spectrum of entrepreneurial interest was simply too wide to categorise. Branding challenges, I find, are more connected to the business development stage rather than industry, which is why this collection is not divided into any particular sections and all brand heroes featured are categorised alphabetically. Each story is a full episode with its own independent plot. You can, therefore, read this book by opening it randomly, focus on a brand story of your choice, or devour it from cover to cover. If the reading inspires any questions, visit www.incelement.co.uk/brand-heroes-the-book and share your thoughts and questions. If it is in my power, I shall give you the best possible answer.

Even big brands were start-ups once. If they succeeded, why not us?

You will notice that, with a few exceptions, the brands covered are boutique brands and not the Apples of this world. Why? These are brands I not only aspire to but can relate to as well. I am such a brand myself, both as Klementyna and as Inc Element, and for that reason I understand their challenges much better – simply because these are also my challenges. Their issues and ideas resonate with me. Their ways of overcoming problems are such that I can apply them in my own situations. Brands of the scale of Apple are today, in my mind, too abstract to the world of small and medium enterprises. I think that we will have a better chance of reaching their level when we focus on what's at hand. After all, they had to begin somewhere as well. It is an opportunity to get an insider's view, look at brand stories as clues on how to devise and implement better strategies here and now, when we are still seeds and not yet apples.

I hope you will find it entertaining and instructive. Enjoy.

LEIGH ASHTON, SASUDI

Name of business: SaSuDi (derives from SAles, SUpport and DIrection)

Founders: Leigh Ashton and Jonathan Mills

Years in business: Sasudi launched March 2016; however, its creators have been involved in sales and marketing since the mid eighties

Speciality: Educating and supporting small business owners in sales mindset

Location: London

Reach: National

Key to success: Good mindset supported by good strategy

Biggest challenge for businesses: Prioritisation and task completion; and cashflow

Greatest asset: Partnerships

THE ONE GOOD WAY TO SELL

If you are a business owner, chances are you have attended at least one sales-related seminar. I have. This was not a subject I was taught at school and, as a founder of a young business, I recognised this as a largely uncharted area.

Yet I found myself disappointed with most of them; I can say that today with the benefit of hindsight. I remember being left wanting. I was usually told to follow a script, make a cold call or send a defined number of emails per day. All participants were told the same thing, irrespective of the type of enterprise they – we – represented. And, my favourite, we were told ‘to act confident’ – with no hints as to how to actually become confident in selling.

The difference is significant.

Sasudi understands that and this is what put them on my heroic radar.

Sales – a big deal?

It is not only about the tools. It is not just about the strategies. It is not merely about accountability. It is not about the mindset alone, either. It is about all of those elements.

What it is about – through and through – is you. The person who wants to become a sales leader, to help a team or themselves. *“If you can change your thinking, you can change your behaviour. But you cannot change someone’s behaviour without changing their thinking first. Thought creates the feeling that creates the action that gets you the result,”* says Leigh Ashton.

My way, your way, right way?

This change of focus has a profound effect. Where previous courses made me think *“I know nothing, I need to start all over,”* Sasudi told me *“Let’s look at who you are and build from that.”*

*It is best to read
“I know nothing”
in the voice
of Manuel, a
character from
Fawlty Towers –
then you will fully
grasp the attitude
I wish this phrase
to represent.*

Many solopreneurs, and even seemingly confident sales people within larger businesses, associate the process of selling with fear, obstacles, pushing, force and uncomfortable situations. These are perceptions. Sasudi tackles all the myths associated with sales early on. They do it through their platform, built around five areas of interest: learning, inspiration, sales, community and customers.

Sales 360°

You have access to techniques that will improve your performance, tools to help improve processes – or, if you are at the beginning of the road, to start building them. It is a motivating safety net. It is an online tool that lives with you in real life, so to speak. All the tips and strategies are easily translated into behaviours, systems and actions. This platform is dedicated to small businesses and gives them clarity and guidance so needed at those early stages. It is very useful when it comes to keeping the overwhelming at bay. It allows the user to learn at their own pace and nudges them, at the right moments, to keep them going so that they do not stall.

It gives you a community, even though you are working individually. It offers support of real people, even though it is online.

It gives you a sense of accomplishment, even though you are still learning.

It helps you to be of value and generate value.

Person, team, brand

The first time I spoke with Leigh Ashton, co-founder of Sasudi, was over Skype. The second, in person. I have also attended her workshop. Her language is clear and her messages precise. When she presents facts and figures, she makes them inspirational – and when she chooses to read out a quote or present a philosophy, she makes it quite down-to-earth. Each time she came across as friendly, approachable, reasonable and kind. And so is the manner of her book and the structure of Sasudi's website. Clarity, reason and encouragement – all with a smile. This is why Sasudi appeals to me so much.

WHY A BRAND HERO?

It is not a one-fits-all solution. Yet Sasudi is flexible enough to help each user find the best way to improve their sales. It helps you work out the one sales strategy that works for you – your own.

Sasudi became a safe harbour for businesses wanting to improve their turnover but secretly being afraid of it. It is a healing space that helps you funk up your sales, let go of the fear, act with confidence and focus on creating an amazing business presence.

They are straightforward, they understand their audience, and they use the language that is easy to understand.

That is why Sasudi is my brand hero.

MY LESSONS FROM THIS CONVERSATION

1. Where you are now is the best place to move forward.
2. There's always a way out, just ask.
3. Techniques alone are not enough, you have to use them with the right intention, otherwise your actions will lack conviction and the outcome will not be satisfying.
4. One solution will not fit all, but you can most definitely develop the one solution that will work for you.

ELEMENTS OF A STRONG BRAND

- CLARITY
- ACCESSIBILITY
- EXPERTISE

INSPIRATION

- *Your Brain at Work* by David Rock
- *Find Your Lightbulb* by Mike Harris

MOTTO

“Taking the fear and dread out of sales for small business owners.”

FIND OUT MORE

- Read *iSell* by Leigh Ashton
- Visit Sasudi’s website and pre-register at sasudi.com
- Follow them on Google+ [+SasudiSales/posts](#)

What is the biggest value of your brand?

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