

More on Brand You

About 15 years ago, I invented—I'm not really sure it's true, but that's what people tell me—the term called Brand You. And the idea of Brand You was not to exercise your ego. The idea of Brand You was that the labor market worldwide was becoming astonishingly competitive relative to what it had been in the past, and that you could no longer expect to survive by just being essentially an anonymous bureaucrat in a purchasing department or a logistics department or an engineering department. You really had to stand for something.

And that idea in general, of course, has accelerated with outsourcing, with more globalization. Despite some of the financial chaos, globalization will continue in one and only one direction with development of artificial intelligence and so on. The Brand You idea means come hell or high water or hell *and* high water, from the beginning of your career, you have to think about your areas of distinction.

Now, one thing that I routinely hear when people push back on this, “Well, there's some entrepreneurs and you lived in Silicon Valley for 35 years.” But I'm not entrepreneurial. That is the biggest bunch of baloney in the world. One of my favorite people in the world is Muhammad Yunus, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for being the inventor of micro-lending, and his micro-loans in the poorest parts of the world—he started in Bangladesh—were typically made to women who had not been formal businesspersons, but, in fact, who started little businesses and became entrepreneurs.

Yunus said at one point, “All human beings are entrepreneurs. When we were in the caves, we were all self-employed: finding our food, feeding ourselves. That's where the human history began. As civilization developed, we suppressed it. We became ‘labor,’ because they stamped us, ‘You are labor.’ We forgot that we were all entrepreneurs.” Virtually everybody who was watching this two or three or four or five generations ago—both of your great-great-grandparents or whatever the magic term is—were entrepreneurs.

All of this new world is about behaving in an entrepreneurial fashion as if you did not have a standard career path ahead of you, because you *don't* have a standard career path ahead of you. Independence is not an option. It is a *must*.