

## You Are What You Think – Face a Weak Economy with a Strong Personal Brand

So much has been said, discussed, and argued about the "economic situation" in the past year. Is it possible that there is a stone unturned on this topic? Well, yes there is ... because the way you communicate your personal brand in this economy can have a big impact on how well you weather the challenges that could come your way.

In particular, your *reactions* to the economy, your *thoughts* about the economy, and your *actions* related to the economy can impact the ultimate outcome for your personal brand – the trademarked you. In fact, your reactions, thoughts, and actions are three of five total activities that communicate your personal brand each and every day (along with your look and your sound.)

**REACTIONS.** If you want to see someone's true personal brand, watch them react to adverse events. How you react in crisis situations says a lot about who you really are. The key to mastering your personal brand is to remain consistent over time. Remember that you can't always control what happens to you, but you can control how you *react* to what happens to you. That's how strong personal brands are built.

So, think about the personal brand you're presenting through your reactions to the economy. Are you hiding in a corner with your head buried in the sand? Are you talking 'doom and gloom' with your friends every chance you get? Are worries about the economy keeping you awake at night?

Take a deep breath, and keep a calm, clear head. You will make better decisions when you stop yourself from shifting into a fear-driven state that may cause knee-jerk reactions you regret later.

**THOUGHTS.** Thoughts are things. That may sound like a radical idea to you, but scientists are proving more and more that thoughts exist in the world in a very real way, and they have a strong influence on what happens to you. So, become aware of what your thoughts are telling you about the economic situation. Sit back and take inventory of how you feel about the financial climate right now. What emotions come to mind? Fear? Anxiety? Anger? You will act – and also build your personal brand – based on those feelings. So, if you're full of angst, consider the possible actions that will stem from that.

Here's how psychiatrists put it: Your thoughts drive your emotions, and – in turn - your emotions drive your behavior. And those behaviors are responsible for creating the results – the ultimate outcomes - of your life. It's good old cause-and-effect in action, with the ultimate “cause” being your thoughts. So, even if you can't quite get on board with believing that thoughts are things, at a minimum, your thoughts have the power to undermine your personal brand if you're not careful.

So, make your thoughts productive. Take proactive steps to manage your money well. Focus on what you *do* have that is positive, and focus on what you are grateful for. Chances are you have it a lot better than many people in the world. Don't keep your Thoughts pinned on what isn't perfect or what could go wrong. Think about how things can go *right*.

**Watch your words!** What you say stems from your thoughts, too, so be mindful of how you "talk" about today's economy. Just calling the situation a "crisis" (which is the key word you see spread all over magazines, newspapers, and television) creates anxiety. Think about it: The U.S. government called its economic package a "bailout." Doesn't that sound like Congress is trying to save a sinking ship? They couldn't have chosen a worse word. And remember that the media thrives on creating drama in order to sell their publications or get you to tune in to their newscasts. That doesn't mean that the drama is always as cataclysmic as it sounds. Sit back and objectively analyze your own situation before deciding if it truly is a "crisis."

You probably know people who are talking about all of this as though the world is coming to an end. What personal brand are those people communicating? What good will a brand like that do to make their economic prospects brighter? No one wants to be around someone with a negative or a defeatist personal brand. So, don't fall victim to branding yourself in that way. It will do nothing to help you build a better financial future for yourself.

If someone you know tries to suck you into their big black hole of doom, politely excuse yourself, or focus on something more constructive. Stay positive in your conversations, and it will make a world of difference. Be an example of how to respond, and remind others of what is truly important. Just like in the market crashes of 1929 and 1987, this, too, shall pass.

**ACTIONS.** If you still find that the economic situation is keeping you up at night, objectively assess your situation, and make a plan. Are you anxious because you're too far in debt? If that's the case, take decisive action by seeing a financial counselor. (And if your financial advisor talks negatively about the markets, find another one!) Sit back, and calmly consider: What feels "right" to do? Set some goals, and take at least one action each day to move closer to that goal.

There are always ebbs and flows in our finances – whether personal or global. The trick is to find productive ways to make things better. If you purposefully work at remaining consistent with your desired personal brand, you'll be one step closer to moving out of the storm.

**How will we look back on this economic event in the future?** Reports about both the 1929 and 1987 market crashes have shown that people who kept a calm demeanor and stayed the course ended up doing better in the long run –from both a financial and an emotional standpoint. And you can be sure they built strong personal brands in the meantime, too.

# BRENDA BENCE

Achieving Greater Success for “YOU™” and  
Your Company Through the Power of Branding

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**Brenda S. Bence** is an internationally-recognized branding expert, Certified Executive Coach, dynamic trainer and Certified Speaking Professional, and the author of several books. Her award-winning *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo* personal branding book series began with *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo: The Breakthrough Personal Branding System Based on Proven Big-Brand Marketing Methods to Help You Earn More, Do More, and Be More at Work*, the first step-by-step personal branding system for defining and communicating your personal brand for greater success in the workplace.



With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda’s career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development.

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