



Brenda Bence

By Karin Frick

Why did you decide to come to Thailand?

I was living in China working for Procter & Gamble when I got a phone call from Bristol-Myers Squibb's consumer division (Mead Johnson) with an offer to move to Bangkok and take on the role of Regional Marketing Director for Asia. By then, I had lived in the U.S., Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Greater China, and I felt that living and working in Southeast Asia would be a great next step. So I accepted the job, my husband and I packed up, and we moved to Bangkok.

What is it that made you stay?

It didn't take long after moving to Bangkok to realize that it just "felt right." After a fairly nomadic career that involved living and working on four different continents and in many different countries, it's been an unexpected pleasure to have just one place feel so much like "home," but that's exactly how Thailand feels. The weather, the people, the food, the chaos, the "sanook", the family values, the dichotomies, the fascinating culture, the fun and easy weekend opportunities away ... I could go on and on about why we like it here.

And, professionally, about six years ago, I left Mead Johnson as VP International Marketing to start up my own branding and marketing training and consulting company, also based here in Bangkok. Our current client base is located across about 15 different countries throughout Asia, Europe and North America. Because Bangkok is so centrally located, it's just a few hours' flight to travel to any country where my Asian clients are located, and likewise, I can also just hop on a plane and head to Europe on an overnight flight, landing in the morning and begin working there right away. For the U.S. clients, I just arrange to work with 3 or 4 different clients at a time when I go back, and usually for about 2-3 weeks at a time. So, being located in Bangkok works great in that regard, too.

What do you like best about living in Thailand?

How to choose? Hmmmm..... I guess I would say the quality of life is the best part. And, I'm not a cold or dry weather person either, so living in year-round warmth and humidity is great (even if it does rain buckets on occasion!).

Can you give us a description of your ideal weekend?

Friday: Leave the office early and get a foot massage with my husband, meet up with some friends for a fun night of dining and good wine ... Saturday: sleep in, followed by a kick-butt one-hour personal trainer session, write a few pages of my next book sitting by the swimming pool where it's quiet, go see a great movie in the late afternoon followed by dinner at a new restaurant we haven't tried before. Attend a professional English-language musical production and then, when it's over, jump in the car and drive to Hua Hin to stay overnight in my favourite penthouse condo overlooking the ocean. Wake up on Sunday morning to the sun rising over the beach. Hit Starbucks in town once we're ready for a decaf latte and use the wifi there to check e-mails and catch up with family in the States. Snap my fingers and time-travel back to Bangkok (hey, you said this was "ideal" and I really don't care for the drive back to Bangkok all that much). Finish the evening BBQ'ing by the pool with friends until it gets too dark out to see, then play Shanghai Mah-jong until the wee hours of the morning...

Do you collect any items or have time consuming hobby?

I've been collecting funny advertising from across the world for years and years. In fact, I have the largest personal library of funny advertising that I know of. I've even developed a keynote address based on these ads which I call Sex, Laughs, and Videotape: The Strategic Role of Humor in Advertising. I can tailor this talk to any audience in the world because I have hilarious advertising that - literally - spans the

globe. It's been a lot of fun to put my large collection to use, and in general, audiences love the presentation and laugh hysterically at the advertising!

As for a time-consuming hobby, despite all my years of travel, I still never get tired of hitting the road. I love exploring new places and countries, and I have a goal to become a member of the Travelers' Century Club for people who have travelled to 100 countries or more. I'm working toward that goal (I'm close to 70 countries now), and I hope to get to 100 by no later than 2017.

Your new book on personal branding "How YOU™ are like Shampoo" has just been officially released. Can you explain what personal branding is all about and what the name of the book means?

I define personal branding as "the way you want people to perceive, think, and feel about you in relation to others." In the book, I show the reader how the same principles that apply to crafting and communicating a successful corporate brand can apply to each one of us - as individuals - to help us craft and effectively communicate our unique personal brands. So, just like a shampoo can be successfully branded, so can the trademarked "YOU™" - by applying the principles outlined in my personal branding system. Do you see now how YOU™ are like shampoo?

Sounds intriguing, but does this apply to Asians?

My experience with speaking and training on this topic to Asian audiences has been terrific! In general, Asians have a love affair with brands, and the idea that each one of us already has a personal brand - even if you live in more of a group culture society - is intriguing to so many. The How YOU™ are like Shampoo system is not a self-centered approach. It's not about how to stick out in a crowd. Instead, it's about correctly identifying your Audience and their Needs and setting out to meet those needs in a way that allows you to be the best you can be at work while still staying true to who "YOU™" really are. That concept applies to us all and transcends cultural and national boundaries.

Do you have any quick tips for our readers on how they can more effectively communicate their personal brand in their workplace?

The key to success in personal branding is to follow the three key steps outlined in How YOU™ are like Shampoo: First, clearly define your personal brand by using the six core elements that make up your personal brand definition. Second, consistently communicate your personal brand via the five activities you do every day that most impact your personal brand. And third, avoid damaging your personal brand by not committing Personal Brand Busters™. Learning to take control of your personal brand is not only empowering and career-enhancing, but it's actually a lot of fun, too. Want to learn more? Check out: www.HowYOUAreLikeShampoo.com!

Can you tell us about your future dreams and ambitions?

My company, Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, Ltd. currently has clients across three continents, and I want to expand our client base to cover 5 continents within a year or two. I want to finish writing and publish all five of the books in the How YOU™ are like Shampoo series: in addition to the current version, there will be specific versions for Entrepreneurs, for Job Seekers, for Graduates/Students, and for Medical Professionals. I have also written a book called "Jet Lag 101: 101 Tips for Avoiding Jet and Making Your Long-Haul Flight a Breeze" - so I want to find the time to get that published. Oh, and while we're at it, someday I'd like to be able to travel via my own private jet - I could reach more new countries faster that way!