



Jennifer
Hawkins didn't let a little wardrobe malfunction stop her from landing a \$4m contract with Myer at just 23.



Zoe
Foster realised "what I did well and what I should let other people do well" helped define her personal brand.



Gisele
Bündchen, the world's richest supermodel, recently launched a line of things to help the environment.



Tyra
Banks banked on her not-fit-for-the-catwalk curves; now the supermodel-turned-TV mogul is worth an estimated \$88m.



Hilary
Duff is doing it all: actress, fashion designer, singer, and has two perfumes to her name.

The key to becoming the next Jen Hawkins or Gisele? Being your own self and backing it 100 per cent. By Erica Bartle

GIRL BRAND

Think about the women you really admire, the ones who are full of energy and zest for life and, chances are, they have one thing in common – they are really excellent at being themselves and love what they do. But more often than not, this confident sense of self – their “personal brand” – is something they’ve had to work at.

Known for her quirky writing style, cheeky sense of humour, penchant for bold colours and washed look, it wasn't until she was 25 that author and editor-in-chief of *primped.com.au*, Zoë Foster, finally got comfortable in her shoes (literally).

“I think it came down to realising what I did well and what I should let other people do well,” says Foster, now 28. “Defining my ‘style’ contributed. I was finally honest about what suited me – pencil skirts, elegant bags, shoes, long brunette – and what didn't –

baby-doll dresses, crack-flashing denim, outfits playing up both the boobs and the legs.

“But multiple elements are important,” Foster continues. “It's just working out when each of them should take the spotlight and being diligent. That means giving my boyfriend quality time; reading for 15 minutes before bed; novel writing on Saturdays; seeing girlfriends and family on Sundays; and meditating before brekkie. It all fits, you just have to schedule it.”

DESIGNING YOUR LIFE

In our fast-fashion, achievement-driven, always-online, celebrity-obsessed culture, we don't seem to have the time to work on developing a sense of our true selves. It's easier to dress like Nicole Richie and say yes to that promotion, than to consider what will really suit us.

But, as Foster can attest, becoming your own über brand has benefits – more time spent doing the things you love, with the people you love and a kick-ass career to boot.

“A lot of young women are living someone else's dream – climbing the corporate ladder, filling their days with meetings, checking emails nonstop and living off a CrackBerry,” says Gary Bertwistle, author of *Who Stole My Mojo?* (Allen & Unwin, \$22.95). “It's not until something goes wrong – they lose a job, a family member gets sick or something drastic happens – when they sit back and ask, ‘What do I really want from my life?’ And they realise they're not living it.”

For Juliet Potter, founder of female-friendly car site *autochic.com.au*, it was realising she'd never thrive in the corporate world that prompted her to think differently and back herself. →



WhoWhatWear.com
Online fashion mag founders Hillary Kerr and Katherine Power say their company “is a direct reflection of our tastes and style”.



Juliet
Potter, founder of female-friendly car site *autochic.com.au*, says “doing something no-one had done before” drove her to success.

← “The one thing that stops women is belief in themselves,” says Potter. “I had this ‘power of one’ theory that I could make a difference for women via the Net. I did something that no-one had done before. Although it's been unbearably hard to pioneer something, therein lies the opportunity.”

DREAM WEAVER

Before you start to develop your brand, take stock of where you are now, then visualise the person you want to be. “Have an idea in your mind of the life you want,” says Bertwistle. “Picture it vividly and imagine a positive outcome. You must have a clear understanding of where you are right now and how you'd like to see yourself. Dream big, think big and the law of attraction will work to take you towards your goals.”

Dreaming big, and thinking positively, certainly worked for Hillary Kerr and Katherine Power of successful online fashion magazine *whowhatwear.com*. “At risk of sounding horribly immodest, we were confident about starting the site because we loved the idea,” says Kerr. “It's a direct reflection of both of us: our tastes, style, and more. Every image and word that appears must match our high standards and convey the spirit of *WhoWhatWear*.”

CREATE VALUES

When you clarify your personal values, you can feel more confident in decision making and, therefore, goal setting. If something isn't going to help you lead your ideal life or get you closer to your vision, then why waste time? And, what's more,

people who stick to their values earn a ton of respect.

“A big part of who I am is my sense of humour and fairly laid-back way of doing things,” says Dani Lombard, “chief talker” of Dani Lombard Public Relations (danilombard.com.au).

“I've tried to weave that into my company's brand as well. My website is very fun and quirky and not your typical boring corporate site. Another major part of who I am is supporting ethical and sustainable brands/companies that are making a difference.”

CLOSE SUPPORT

Behind every successful girl brand is a cheer squad of mentors, friends, family members and encouraging allies who want you to succeed and will do anything they can to help you believe in your decisions.

“I didn't actually feel confident enough to start my business when I did it,” says Lombard. “I had all kinds of doubts about whether I had enough experience or knowledge. A few friends were in my ear telling me to go out on my own but the final step was asking my dad what he thought.

“Straightaway, he was on board saying I should've done it ages ago! I figured that if Mr Sensible thought it was a good idea, then maybe it was.”

SELLING YOURSELF

Whether you're self-employed, an employee, on the interview circuit or an entrepreneur, the surest way to get ahead is to sell yourself. And that means knowing your personal brand: your strengths, what

sets you apart from the others and who you're marketing to.

“There's a risk in standing out anywhere, including in the workplace,” says Lisa O'Brien, director of *Careers Coach* (careerscoach.com.au). “The key is to get noticed for the right reasons. For example, the quality of your work rather than for being late for work. The upside of standing out is that you'll get positive attention and be considered for more opportunities. By being your authentic self, you'll also demonstrate a high level of integrity – and that is very attractive.”

The way you present yourself is another way to communicate your personal brand to others. For Foster, who attends several industry events each week, this means impeccable grooming, a shot of look-at-me colour and a smile. “I own far too much black, but will never wear it without a fierce bright lip,” she declares. “I must wear colour in some capacity each day, otherwise I feel blah, common, drab and morose.”

ENJOY EACH WIN

Just as companies celebrate a successful new venture or exceeding sales targets, taking the time to reward yourself for what you've accomplished enriches your brand.

“Don't wait until the end to celebrate – enjoy the bits along the way,” says Bertwistle. “You could just sit down and congratulate yourself for doing it, buy a pair of shoes or a book, get a massage or your hair done, or take your friend out to dinner. It's important to take stock and celebrate each milestone to keep motivated towards your end goal.” *The end*