



# Women Who Brand: Discussion Guide

## Introduction: It's Time for Women to Brand

1. A central thesis of the book is that we all have to be branders in today's competitive and uncertain workplace, and personal branding is an area where women have some catching up to do. We're not as good as men are in terms of marketing and promoting ourselves. Do you agree? Why or why not? What about yourself personally?
2. The introduction discusses gender differences, such as the different way women and men tend to approach a task, while in other ways, there aren't differences between men and women. What gender differences have you observed in the business workplace? Personally in your life?
3. Women often have powerful aptitudes that they can leverage in the workplace such as exceptional empathy, strong verbal and communication ability, relationship skills and the like. Of course, none is carved in stone for any individual but they represent orientations because of our gender. What strengths do you see in yourself and how do they give you an edge in business?
4. The chapter also argues that this is the best time for women since many companies and organizations are looking to get more women into senior positions, a movement propelled by countries like Finland and France that mandate a fixed percentage of corporate board seats go to women. Do you think government mandates are a good idea for women in business?

## Chapter 1: The Art of Authentic Personal Branding

1. Is it harder for women to get it right in the workplace in terms of the way they present themselves? Have you ever had "Female Behavior Confusion Disorder"?
2. One study showed that men tend to be comfortable talking about their abilities in business, what the male researcher called "The Male Hubris Effect" while women tend to downplay their abilities and achievements, what the researcher dubbed "The Female Humility Effect"? Do you agree? Why or why not? How can being modest not be an asset in business?
3. Women outperform men in school and in college, yet that all changes when they enter the workforce. Why the disparity? What's rewarded in academia that is different from the way the workplace operates in your experience?
4. Kaputa argues that what's needed to get more women up the pipeline are soft power skills such as self promotion, projecting confidence and gravitas, visibility and other personal branding skills. What do you think is holding women back? How are your soft skills?



## **Chapter 2: Brand Yourself for Success**

1. Are you where you want to be in your career? Where would you like to be in 3- 5 years? (Or whatever timeframe makes sense for you.) How can the branding process outlined in the chapter help you achieve your goals?
2. Self-branding means being able to articulate your USP or unique selling proposition, a simple, clear expression of who you are and how you bring value in the workplace. How would you define Brand You?
3. What's holding you back from achieving what you want in your career?
4. Imagine you're told next week that your job has been eliminated. The job market is difficult in your industry. What do you do now? What's your game plan?

## **Chapter 3: Emotional Intelligence Gives Women an Edge**

1. Most women score strongly in empathy and emotional intelligence. The chapter outlines how this can give women an advantage in terms of reading non-verbal clues and building relationships. What do you think? What's been your experience?
2. Kaputa talks about how persuasive mimicry works. Pick a partner and practice the techniques outlined in the chapter such as subtle imitation of gestures, facial expressions, words and posture to "click" with others.
3. From a branding perspective, perceptions are paramount. What do you think are the perceptions that others have about you? What would you like them to be?
4. If you were a famous person, who would it be? Why? For each person go around the table and ask the other people in the discussion group to share their ideas. Then share your self assessment.

## **Chapter 4: Female Verbal Agility Can Give You a Communication Head Start**

1. What is your first name? What adjectives and imagery comes to mind when you think of your name? If you could choose your name, what would it be? Is your name distinctive or similar to others? Can you own your name on the Internet?
2. How do you rate your verbal ability in the workplace? Are you a good presenter? How could you improve? How do you handle "difficult conversations"?
3. Kaputa talks about mitigated speech that women tend to favor. Where do you see yourself on the chart of various levels of mitigated speech? How can you strengthen your verbal power?
4. Read a sentence from the book, then go around the room and ask for comments on the sound and pitch of your voice. What adjectives come to mind?



## **Chapter 5: Use the Power of Story In Person and Online**

1. What's your story? Go around the room with each person telling a short career narrative in about two minutes. Give feedback on how each person's career story could be stronger and more interesting.
2. Imagine you are pitching yourself for a new job that you really want. What is the most important takeaway message you want the interviewer to have about you?
3. Looking at the ideas in the chapter on effective storytelling, share an important accomplishment in a story format including the MacGuffin or catalyst, your trials and difficulties, the turning point and the final resolution. Try to bring the story to life as if you were filming it.
4. What's holding you back from achieving what you want in your career?
5. Kaputa talks about how to tell a sad story or relate a failure by focusing on what you learned rather than what went wrong. Ask each person to tell a short story about a failure.

## **Chapter 6: Visual Aspects of Appearance and Power**

1. Kaputa talks about the "beauty premium" and how attractive people are hired over less attractive people. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Are women under the microscope more than men in the business world in terms of what they are wearing? Why or why not? What are ways to deal with increased scrutiny?
3. What do you want your clothes, hair style to say about you? What are the messages that you want to communicate non-verbally? What messages are you communicating non-verbally? What changes might work for you?

## **Chapter 7: The Female Style of Leadership**

1. What is your leadership style? What adjectives come to mind? Describe a situation that demonstrates your leadership style.
2. Who do you admire as a leader? How would you describe their leadership style?
3. What are your career goals? What action steps could you take to achieve them?
4. What feedback have you received from your boss, colleagues, clients? What would you like to change? How can you do that?



## **Chapter 8: Born to Network**

1. Kaputa argues that women tend to form deep relationships with a few people and men tend to form more superficial relationships with larger groups? Do you agree?
2. Who are your “Career Champions,” your informal board of directors? Mentors? Sponsors? Allies? Connectors? Who could you nurture to become future advisors?
3. How would you rate your LinkedIn Profile? What is your headline? Do you tell a compelling career narrative that highlights who you are and the value you bring? Have you incorporated “rich” media like videos or slides to your profile?
4. How large is your virtual network on LinkedIn? Who else will you invite to be part of your LinkedIn network? How many recommendations do you have on LinkedIn? Who else could you ask to recommend you?

## **Chapter 9: A Brand for All Seasons**

1. As you think about your life and work, what personal branding activities do you plan to incorporate into your career game plan?
2. Ophelia’s story is about thinking more strategically and creatively about yourself and your abilities when you want to transition to a different career, particularly uncovering hidden assets and creating new experiences. If you were to pursue a different career track, what could you do so people connect the dots differently?
3. If you wanted to stay in your field, what could you do to make yourself more “relevant” to the current marketplace?
4. Kaputa talks about the importance of visibility in product branding and for people as well. Do you agree? How could you make yourself more visible in some arena?

## **Chapter 10: It’s Up to You**

1. Kaputa makes the argument that women have some catching up to do in terms of personal branding skills. Do you agree? What about your personal situation?
2. Where you surprised to hear the Harvard Business School story? Do you buy into the Big Fish Little Pond theory? Have you been affected by it?
3. Many high achieving women have experienced the “Impostor Syndrome”? Have you ever had to fight negative thoughts about not being good enough? How have you dealt with negative messages like this?
4. Which women profiled in the chapter speak to you: Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, Barbara Corcoran, Marissa Mayer, Christine Lagarde, Angela Merkel, Dilma, Rousseff, Madeleine Albright and Martha Stewart. Why?