

## **Knowing what you stand for strengthens democracy**

by Thomas Gad

**If you don't have a clear mission or an issue of your own, you are in great danger of becoming a victim of fanatics: people with strong personalities and with, as it seems, important missions and exciting issues.**

We are so easily seduced by people like that; they usually have the fame, the drive and the differentiation. And most of us are real suckers for an issue. Especially if we don't have an issue of our own, we have an urge to import one from someone else. Religious and political leaders know this; for centuries they have used this situation to capture our minds.

Our democracy is actually built on the presupposition that we all know what we stand for and that we are able to match our own ideas about society against the ideas and issues of the people who stand for election to be our representatives in parliament and government and to choose the ones who fit our own stand-point best. What happens if you don't know what you stand for and still have to vote for someone to represent you? Well, of course issues that appear attractive in the short term to you will easily seduce you.

This is exactly what happens on the political scene in most countries today. With few exceptions, the political parties drive very shallow and short-sighted issues in order to attract people who don't know what they stand for themselves, and who don't have important issues of their own.

So, how do you find out what you stand for?

Finding your issue with the help of Personal Branding involves defining who you really are and clarifying yourself. Many people don't like this; they prefer to hide. On the other hand, some have a natural talent for defining and communicating what they stand for. They are like talented musicians, playing the music by ear. But others find it more difficult: they need the music written down; they need a process of self-reflection, which for most people will be the introduction to self-development.

Our suggestion for how to find out what you stand for is to use a methodology we call Brand Me. It provokes you to get your personal issue clear, creating a personal Motto and a platform for your personality. All this is described in our latest book "Managing Brand Me" (Pearson, Momentum, 2002).

Personal Branding is very much about your **mission in life or "having your own important issue"**. A lot of people don't really bother to think about this very much, they just live their lives. Until one day, struck by a life crisis of some kind, the total perspective, the whole reason for living suddenly becomes dramatically important.

To create a Brand Me, in the way we suggest in the book, is a very good preparation for any crisis in life. It also gives a certain comfort or peace of mind; you get a good feeling of being complete somehow.

The benefit of this process is that you have to explore and express your own view of yourself and how you actually want to be perceived. This is something we seldom do for ourselves; instead we let others describe us.

We almost never think of ourselves in a structured way. Very few of us deliberately try to manage and implement our own desired personality systematically.

So, Personal Branding is important for democracy and freedom; a person who knows what he or she stands for is less likely to be vulnerable to charismatic anti-democratic leaders.

But it's also very good to be able to stand up for yourself and what you believe in your daily life too, in relationships as well as at work.

Thomas is founder of *Brandflight* ([www.brandflight.com](http://www.brandflight.com)) with offices in Stockholm and London. His clients include companies like BrainHeart Capital, Stockholm City Council, Kista Science City, Carnegie Mellon University - Software Engineering Institute, Cerealia, Swedish Farmers Association and Johnson & Johnson - Ethicon.

Gad has developed a unique 4-dimensional method of creating, transforming, and maintaining brands and authored the book *4-D Branding*, with foreword by Sir Richard Branson (*Financial Times/ Prentice Hall, London 2001*). He has also co-authored *Managing Brand Me – how to build your personal brand* (Pearson-Momentum, London 2002).