

Take on Board Podcast – Episode 188

Transcript – Monica Rosenfeld



Helga Svendsen 0:00

So I'd like to start the conversation today by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we record. For me, that is the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and pay my respects to their elders past and present. I acknowledge their continuing connection to land waters and culture and acknowledge that this land was never seated. Today on a Take on Board podcast, I'm speaking with Monica Rosenfeld about personal brand. First, let me tell you about Monica. Monica is a communications keynote speaker and workshop facilitator, comedian and founder of stories that stir storytelling events and podcast. She has worked in the media all her professional life and is on a mission to facilitate human connection through incredible communication. Welcome to the Take on Board podcast. Monica.

Monica Rosenfeld 0:47

Thank you so much lovely to be here.

Helga Svendsen 0:50

As always, before, we delve into personal branding, I always love to dig a little bit deeper about the guests that I have. So I'm wondering, where were your parents born? And do you know where your ancestors are from?

Monica Rosenfeld 1:03

both my parents and grandparents actually were born in Romania. So my grandparents, or four of them were Holocaust survivors. Shortly after that tragedy, they had their children being my parents. And both my parents migrated to Australia on a big ship. So they essentially escaped communist Romania. For my mum, it was a third attempt. And my dad also had drama on his side. But they both boarded a ship different ships that didn't know each other. But they are both from the same town of Transylvania, they boarded a ship and it took them six weeks to come to Sydney. They had no money, no English, and some of their relatives had already settled here. So my grandparents worked in sweatshops pretty much on my mother's side, my dad's side, my grandmother clean toilets, my grandfather became a taxi driver. And and they made on the steps of Bondi Beach as teenagers.

Helga Svendsen 2:04

Oh that is beautiful. Oh, hang on. So they met as teenagers. It's interesting, as you were telling me that story. I thought they'd come here as adults, that no clearly not.

Monica Rosenfeld 2:14

They were 15 years old, with no English, and no money. So they have lots of stories of, you know, going to school and being complete outsider, but to just not having a clue what was going on. But they built a very successful and happy lives here. And I'm very grateful to have been born in the lap of luxury in Sydney. And with all the opportunities and all of that, and I just I often say, I cannot believe it was just two generations ago, you know, if you look at what my grandparents went through, with the war, and then all the big change they made coming here, and then my life, it's like, how did I, you know, how did I land in this?

Helga Svendsen 2:59

I think I've said this on the podcast before, but in fact, my grandmother grew up just over the road, possibly from yours in Moldova, just on the other side of the Romanian border. And likewise, Jewish refugees that came to Australia in the late 30s. And my mother was already born by then. So she was very young when she came to Australia. And likewise, came to Australia, no English, you know, lumped into school, you know, I've read some of the diaries and so on if my grandfather back then it's not. Yeah. It's one way to put it. Yeah. So I mean, you've answered part of my next question about where you were born and grew up. But tell me about a bit more about that. And about siblings, if any?

Monica Rosenfeld 3:38

Yes. So I have a brother who is 18 months older than me. We both grew up in Sydney, Dover Heights. So it's near Bondi, when I was two, my dad started his own business as a chartered accountant. And my mum worked as a pathologist, and she left her job shortly after I was born. We, you know, had a wonderful upbringing, wanted for nothing. But my parents coming from their background, were very conscious to make sure that we understood the value of of money and just, you know, work ethic just didn't take things for granted. Although, when you're brought up with everything, only life experiences teaches you not to take things for granted. Because you can be told that by appearance, but you're like that, you know, no, you're talking about until you're an adult. So, very fortunate, very grateful to have had all the opportunities and all the love, especially when you look at the tragic circumstances, just prior to their birth. There was so much love that we were brought up with them. It's amazing the resistance and the the beautiful stuff. It's like a lotus flower, the beautiful stuff that comes from the dirt and the mud.

Helga Svendsen 4:53

A nice way of putting it. Absolutely. So you grew up in in Dover Heights in Sydney. Do you know the traditional owners there with the traditional custodians of the land there?

Monica Rosenfeld 5:02

I don't know about Dover Heights. I mean, I know with Sydney, it's the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, but the actual sort of suburb there, I'm not I'm not totally sure it's...

Helga Svendsen 5:12

....probably I shouldn't say probably, if it's Sydney, Greater Sydney, then that would be part of that.

Monica Rosenfeld 5:17

Yeah. And I'm wondering how many languages do you speak well, I only speak English fluently. However, I studied French at school. And I think if I lived in France for six months or more, I could be fluent. I got quite good at French and I really loved it, but never ended up sealing the deal with my French. But then I'm married to a Dutch guy. So when I met my husband in New Zealand, of all places, I remember my flatmate laughing because we met I was on holiday. So I came back and look, I'm in love. I've met my part life partner. He's like, Yeah, right. It was a holiday romance. But I went and bought a whole lot of tapes from Big W, like, Teach Yourself Dutch. And on Saturday nights, I'd sit there with my tapes, you know, I'm giving my age away. But this was several years ago. And learn things like I still I still know how to say, you know, via Xander pass calm is where the change rooms during links left. It's funny. So I, I've learned baby Dutch because my kids have been brought up bilinguals. So I'm pretty good at Dutch till you know, to a five year old level and I can understand a lot. So I often say to my husband, he's ruined my French because if I try and remember a French word, only the Dutch word comes, unless I don't remember either words. And then I learned Hebrew at school. But yeah, I do not speak in Hebrew, except for the occasional word that I remember.

Helga Svendsen 6:47

I don't speak any other language. I'm just an English speaker. But I think it's interesting. You know, I've learned a little bit of Italian and a little bit of Spanish and in my brain, because I'm not fluent in any of them. If I ever need to speak another language, it's just all of those just mushed into other language. So if I can't find the Italian word, often the Spanish word pick up on the Spanish word, it'll be next in line. And it's all kind of just foreign language, which is not good. But anyway. And last, but not least, where do you feel your place or your home is?

Monica Rosenfeld 7:16

My home is definitely Sydney I grew up here, I love the ocean, you'll often find me in the ocean or on a beach or something, I really connect with water like that. So I feel very lucky that you know, within a stone's throw of where I live, you know, there are a handful of some of the world's best beaches. And we've also I just love nature. So there are so many little nooks and crannies of like national parks and things. I've grown up in Sydney, it's it's all I've really known as a home. I mean, I've traveled and I've lived overseas, but after uni, I did travel for three years. And when I came home, I have never been just so grateful to live in Sydney. And ever since every time I come home from anywhere I just cry when we land or some a bit of a soak like that. So yeah, I love Sydney. This is definitely where my heart lives. I love learning about our First Nations Australian people and I feel like their stories need to be shared more, and a lot of us are in a good place to facilitate that. So it's that's exciting.

Helga Svendsen 8:22

Yeah, fantastic. Okay. So with that introduction, today, we're talking about personal branding, and in particular, how personal branding might be important and what board members need to know about personal branding. Where should we begin?

Monica Rosenfeld 8:37

Where I love to start talking about personal branding is that when you mention it, it sounds like a bit of a buzzword. Our personal branding, like a lot of people have heard of Gary Vee, they watch his YouTube. He's like the king of personal branding. And there's lots of other people as well that you identify as having a strong personal brand like Richard Branson, or, you know, maybe even Elon Musk, whether you love him or hate him. But for me, what it excites me about helping people with their personal brand and developing their personal brand, is that I believe it makes you a purposeful being. Because it's not just a marketing buzzword. It's not just something that are in the hustle of the corporate and entrepreneurial world. That's something that you should do. It is something that gives you direction, it gives you purpose. And the reason for that is when you really delve into what your personal brand is, what you're thinking about is who you want to be in the world. And if you're not that person now who you want to become and how you want to move through the world, and it's about the image that others have of you, but that image directly correlates to how you are being in the world. How you are behaving, how you are communicating the values that you are illustrating as you behave and move and communicate in the world. So that's what really excites me about this work. It gives people clarity on who they are, makes them a purposeful being. And then every day when they wake up, they know who they are, who they want to be, and how they want to behave. And it's just, and they do that, and then they become known as this person that is that. And that's how we create that perception that other people have on us consciously, instead of by default,

Helga Svendsen 10:31

You know, it's so interesting. It's making me think, does personal branding have a branding issue? Because it sounds you know, prop marketing buzzword, all of that stuff. It doesn't sound always like, purpose driven. Defining your values. Yeah, finding your way. Sure. Yeah. Yes. Yeah. Actually, if you were going to rebrand personal branding, how would you rebrand it?

Monica Rosenfeld 10:51

I would say personal branding equals personal being? And how do you want to show up in the world? That's probably what I would rebrand.

Helga Svendsen 11:00

Because yeah, sometimes when I hear I totally get it. And I agree, that the way you show up in the world, if you're clear about that yourself, then it will kind of exude from every pore in everything. Absolutely. When people talk about it as personal branding, sometimes it's just sounds a bit achy, I think. So to be clear on those things. So if it's not so much about the image as such, but about the inner purpose, for board directors thinking about this? Where should they begin in defining or developing that for themselves? Because it can seem like a really big messy ball of wool? Where do they start?

Monica Rosenfeld 11:38

Great question. When I work with people, I take them through what I call my three step process to create your personal brand. So if you think of a beautiful tree adventure, it starts with the roots of the tree. So without the roots of the tree, that tree is not grounded in the earth, the roots nourish the tree, and keep it alive and keep it thriving. So that no matter how strong the wind blows, the tree can stand tall and straight and not just be pushed over by the smallest bit of wind or even a big storm. So I liken those roots to your top five core values. So I get them to think about all their personal stuff, you know, family relationships, not connected to work. And I have a process whereby they get to their top five core values from a personal point of view, then I get them to put on their professional hat. And we do the same exercise. And then we look at the 10 words that we've come up with, and we merge them to get their top five, because we are holistic people. Although we wear different hats in and might show up slightly differently, depending on whether we're taking our kids to school or going to a board meeting, we're still the same person. So I feel that it's important to combine them. That's the roots of the tree, your top five core values, then we go to the trunk of the tree. And that's where we look at the expertise that you want to be known for, or the passion that you bring to your work. So in that board position, what is it what is your strength, what is that thing that you are going to contribute, you know, as part of this board, then we shoot to the top of the tree and that's your physical appearance. Now, if you really want to be remembered and make a memorable impression, one way to do it is be consistent with something about your physical appearance, because if you think of a tree, there are lots of different trees. There's willow trees, frangipani trees, Bogan villas and the list goes on and on. Now, I don't know about you but I've never

seen a frangipani tree with Bowgun Villa flowers. So, I know it's a frangipani tree because it has those beautiful frangipani flowers. Same with your look. So for me, and I know people can't see me. But if you want to look at me, look me up on LinkedIn, I've got this bright fire engine red here. And people literally remember me, but by that like, oh, the redhead girl, the redhead speaker, you know that girl with the red hair. That's something to consider. And then the branches are how you communicate your personal brand. So either with content creation, through the way you communicate in conversation as part of the board, or the different ways that you communicate form the branches. But that's part one, then I take it one step further, and create what we call the fingerprint effect. And I call it that because your fingerprint is completely unique to you as is your personal brand. And it's with your fingerprint that you leave your mark. If you end up in jail and you leave your mark with this hopefully not in jail, but it's with your personal brand that you actually leave your mark on the world. So that's why I call it the fingerprint effect. And we get the fingerprint effect by going back to those top five core values, and linking each one of those two core behavior. And if it actually is in your top five, you will consciously behave in a way that demonstrates that value every single day. If kindness is in your top five, you won't just be kind every now and then every day, you'll think, How can I do an act of kindness today, and it can be tiny, it can be as small as letting someone in in traffic or as big as bringing someone into your house to live from, or whatever it is. But you will be consciously doing that. And when I work with people, some of the exercises that I suggest they do, once we've got the core values, we look at their behaviors, at the end of the week, review their work against their core values, and how did they act in a way that demonstrated those core values? What could they do more of, you know, just so that it's conscious, and front of mind. So that's part one of the fingerprint effect, then we've got the expertise that you want to be known for. Now, chances are for all your lovely listeners who are on boards, you will share your expertise with millions, if not billions of people, right? But absolutely no one, nobody shares your unique story of how you got to being that expert in that or passionate about that topic. So here, I work with people to identify the core elements of their core story. Because we don't need to hear every details since you were a fetus. But just a few of the points along the way that are trigger points that people are like, oh, yeah, wow. And boom, suddenly, you stand out from all the millions of other people who share your expertise, because of your core story. And then we look at the physical appearance, what can be consistent and wrap it all up. And that becomes the fingerprint of it. So that's the process. And then we go through content creation, and how you communicate your personal brand.

Helga Svendsen 17:08

Oh, my goodness, there's so much in there. I love the tree metaphor. What a surprise. a communications expert has an awesome metaphor to describe it, but I love it. It sums it up so well. And all the different parts of it. Gosh, I barely know where to go in asking this. So here we go. I'm gonna go here. Just out of interest. What are your five core values?

Monica Rosenfeld 17:28

I'm glad you asked. My first one is curiosity. I'm a learner. Like I just listened. I absorb. I read a book a week, probably just lots of curiosity. My second one is love. Like for me, love makes the world go

around. Everything comes back to love absolutely everything I do. It's an energetic thing. It's the way I work. Gratitude for me is massive, because it's just everything. What's in my top five. Fun is a massive one for me as well. I'm a stand up comedian as well. And so everything for me it. If it gets too, too, too, too serious. I just need to have fun with what I'm doing. And I need to bring fun and play into the work that I'm doing or I will disengage from it. And the last one is honesty. I'm all about being real. And that really connects to the other sort of talks and things that I give about having real conversations. I do keynotes and workshops on having difficult conversations. It all comes down to honesty at the end of the day, like I struggled to lie. And there is a story connected to this. When I was about seven I think we had this staircase and then under it there was a little cupboard. And one time I think we had a party or birthday party and there were lots and lots of lollies and I ate a lot of them. Most of them with my brother. My dad was always quite a scary man growing up and he was like did you eat the lollies? And I said no. And then it was clear I did eat the lollies and I got in so much trouble. And from that time on I just literally have not been able to lie like I cannot. I live even if I want to I go bright red I start stammering I that was linked to a bit of a trauma for me with the lollies. But it just honesty's massively interesting.

Helga Svendsen 19:27

Oh god, I see now I want to go down that rabbit hole. I'm interested. How do you deal with white lies sometimes, you know, being a bit flexible with things works are better or rounds. I'm just wondering how that that

Monica Rosenfeld 19:43

I think we all have to tell white lies occasionally because it's part of being sociable. You know, you're not going to come straight out and say You look ugly. Yeah, you know. So I think it's more when it comes to honesty. It's more the bigger things and the more straightforward things. But I think we teach our kids to just blend the truth. It's never fully dishonest. And I guess that's why it's a white lie, because it's not a full. It's just like a, we what we just won't focus on that bit.

Helga Svendsen 20:14

Sometimes just being economical. It's so yeah, I find that. Yeah, it leaves that. Exactly, exactly. Oh, so interesting. As you were running through your values, again, just so you know, I was jotting down my five key values, and love and fun. We snap on, because they're both part of my key values as well. That's why we get That's right. So yeah, that's why I was smiling as you were telling me that because I'm like, take, take God, those are fabulous. Okay, so being really clear on that self, and in all levels of it, of the roots of the tree, the trunk of the tree, the branches, and so on. being really clear on that self, will then almost inherently help you to communicate it in. So it will unconsciously help you communicate it. But then being conscious about some of that will also it was interesting when you talked about image even in there that again, sometimes I cringe a little in the conversation around

image, wear the suit and look good and fit in and all that sort of stuff. But I'd love to get your perspective on it is around consistency. So tell me more about that?

Monica Rosenfeld 21:24

Well, when we look at the image part, so the physical part, I always say it's usually something you do already, or it's got to be part of you. You know, if you're more conservative person, I wouldn't be saying go and get a mohawk. So you can be remembered, like that's not the point. But if you are someone who is more out there and creative and likes to shake the boundaries a bit, then the Mohawk might be perfectly suited for you. And I'm actually thinking of a speaker that I know who has bright pink hair and it suits her perfectly, and it's done really well for her. We usually go through what you do now. And we go through everything, colors, you wear style, you wear accessories, hair, makeup. So we look at what you currently do. And then of all the things that you currently do. What's the one thing that you could be consistent on so with one lady this year, she loves wearing hats, but she only wears them sometimes. So I'm like, alright, well when you show up for professional thing or in a photoshoot wear the hat. If you look at Richard Branson, for example, you will notice there's something very consistent in all his images from young to old, and that is he has a goatee. Now we don't even consciously see the goatee. It's not like you say, oh, there's Richard with a goatee. But if he didn't have the goatee, you would be like there's something a bit weird about Richard today. But we connect that goatee with him. So it's got to be something that comes from you that you naturally do already. You know, one of the questions I ask is Do you have any scars? One man that I know has a huge big birthmark on his face. And he's made that part of his physical thing. So in his logo, it's his face with the birthmark. And other lady I know has alopecia. So she's lost all her hair. She used to wear a wig. And now she's decided to just own it. So she goes that and that's her personal brand now, she has no hair and this amazing face beautifully made up. It's usually part of you. And for me the hair being quite out there creative. I like to okay, I'm an attention seeker. I'll admit it. It totally suits me. I've always liked challenging the status quo. I hate being the same as everyone else. I hate playing it too safe. So for me the hair was perfect. And then the whole fun aspect. Like I have fun with the hair. I like that it sort of makes some people feel a bit uncomfortable. It does. It's more like oh, I would never do that but it looks good on you kind of thing and that you know I like that. It's so interesting.

Helga Svendsen 23:56

I'm thinking those that knew me pre pandemic you can see me now even though we're on a podcast those that knew me pre pandemic knew me with dark straight here. I now I now have I can't imagine Yeah, I now have silver well not completely silver but certainly silver higher silver highlights. Clearly heck because I just didn't know that I had curly hair. That's a total other story but it's interesting I get so many more comments now about having silver highlights and just stopping dying than I ever did about my Yeah, obviously. It looks so good. It was a bit to get my head around. And when I started doing it, I just thought I can't do this and then I did and I love it now it's interesting anyways and that's

Monica Rosenfeld 24:39

the thing then it's about owning it. So because you could be walking around going I'm not sure about this. Or you can be walking around going yeah, this is me whether it's going to be the silver curly hair, the pink Mohawk the bright red hair completely bold, a tattoo that you've got whatever it is, just own it. And that goes the same for your entire personal brand. The whole point of this is one, getting clarity for yourself, and then stepping into your power of who you are and owning it. And with that owning of it and the confidence, you will be influential, you will attract the people that resonate with your strength and confidence, you will get more board positions. You will have more impact on the boards that you're on. Yeah, it all comes from that confidence and clarity.

Helga Svendsen 25:32

So I was just about to say, what are the key things you want people to take away? And I suspect you've just done it. That there and then so maybe it's more? Is there anything else to add to the key things that you want people to take away from the conversation that we've had today,

Monica Rosenfeld 25:47

I guess we haven't touched that much on the branches, which is the communication and the the content creation part. So once you know who you are, and your own, who you are, and how you want to add your expertise, and what you the value that you feel you can share with the world. It's about then consciously communicating that. So through LinkedIn or other social media platforms, potentially, in conversation, you know, you might want to share your core story, particularly when you you're new to a board position or, or you don't know, people as well, or everyone doesn't know each other, you know, sharing parts of your core story is really a great thing to do. I've actually got a framework, I mean, it's it's a whole love of thing. But it's it's seven reasons to produce content. And reasons. It's an acronym. I'll quickly I'll quickly go through it if you're short. So R stands for real life stories or case studies. So in the work that you do, what are some of the case studies that you can bring forward? E stands for entrepreneurial, business or story. So it's your backstory of how you got to be doing what you're doing. A stands for awareness days. So there's an awareness day, every day, week and month of the year that you can use as a hook to link your expertise or stories to S stands for statistics and research. So if you've got research on your expertise topic, you know, putting it out there. O stands for opinion and thought leadership. So this is your expert or controversial opinion. And I'll give you an example of controversial opinion versus expert opinion. So an expert opinion is like this is what women need to do if they want to break through the glass ceiling takes there's your expert opinion, blah, blah, blah. This is my expert opinion. A controversial opinion is women need to stop saying sorry, if they want to break through the glass ceiling. This comes from actually leadership expert who I worked with that one women need to stop saying sorry, it's that got picked up by the media and ran it widely, because it was a beautiful expert opinion. But whether it's media, or you're writing a blog about it, or doing a video about it or talking to people about it, there's lots of different ways to repurpose this content, and stands for news of the day. So tapping into the current news of

the day, you know what everyone's chatting about and you contributing to that conversation. And last but not least, it's snappy, five tips, myths and pitfalls. So it's the top five ways to do this the top five things to avoid if you want to do that five myths about things like that.

Helga Svendsen 28:32

Fantastic. Ah, super useful. We've talked about you talked about some of the people who do their personal brand. Well, Elon Musk, Richard Branson, who were there who were the key women that have the personal brand in your view?

Monica Rosenfeld 28:48

Great question. Well, there's one woman that I love using as an example. And that is Celeste Barber, the actor and comedian and many of you might have heard of her from her social media challenge Celeste. Challenge Accepted. And if you haven't have a look on Instagram, it's very, very funny. But she definitely has a strong personal brand. If we all know know who I'm talking about, we can all agree her values are probably about down to earth real humor. She's very consistent in how she shows up. And the reason I like using her as an example is because she's extremely influential. Not only that she fill up stadiums and studios and God knows what with her shows, but she accidentally raised \$50 million in the New South Wales fires of 2019 her mother lives in the south coast. her mum's area was burning. She put out a Facebook Live she wanted to raise \$15,000 And she raised 50 million. Yeah, and that became a problem. But yeah, but that just shows that personal brand led to her during that social challenge, so that was how she communicated her personal brand that then got picked up by the media. Then she wanted to show people that she's got more to her than just this thing. So she started doing this massive comedy shows that led to her being well known. And then you know, when this fire happens, she just was her very own real self and literally just did a live with a big red face. And you know, from a mom's house saying help, and they did. Because they know what she's about what she stands for, and they like and trust her.

Helga Svendsen 30:34

I love it. That is such a great example. And also because you know, back to the conversation at the start about personal branding needed in your rebrand. She's not Schmuck, no at all. Her part of her brand is, as you said her realness her authenticity her down to earth. So I love that great. I'm so glad I asked that question. Thank you. Um, is there a resource you would like to share with the Take on Board community?

Monica Rosenfeld 30:57

Well, I would love to share my podcast. It's not totally related to personal branding, but it's called Stories that Stir. So I run an in person Storytelling Event currently in Sydney, but I'm expanding in

2023. But every single event is recorded live for the podcast, because I felt it was very important that if you were not in the suburb in Sydney, where you could physically come to the event, you would still have the benefit of hearing the stories. So essentially, I created the event to break down barriers, stir conversation and inspire positive change. And each series has six episodes. So they feature the six speakers from the night. And they share a raw and personal story linked to the theme of that particular event. So the themes we've had love, hope, courage, choices and transformation so far. So yes, I'd love everyone to listen to that, because I know you'll enjoy it and spread the word.

Helga Svendsen 31:59

I wholeheartedly endorse that as the listener of your podcast. It is, yeah, it's great. So I recommend it to the community.

Monica Rosenfeld 32:07

And I and I work with people, both one on one and do workshops, helping people with all kinds of things. But personal branding is one of the things that I love helping people with.

Helga Svendsen 32:20

Fantastic well, we'll make sure we put a link both to your LinkedIn and to your website, also in the show notes so people can find you if they need you. Wonderful. Ah, Monica, thank you. Thank you so much for sharing some of your stories, some of your key insights with the Take on Board community today. I know people will find it valuable. So thank you for being here today.

Monica Rosenfeld 32:41

Pleasure. Thank you so much for having me. Really appreciate it. Thank you

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