Dr. Raya Drenski

Brand strategist, university lecturer and speaker



Photography: Tim Ertl

I make potential visible - in founders and in the companies they build.

Dr. Raya Drenski is a Munich-based brand strategist, university lecturer and speaker. She is the founder of branding consultancy smartset and Brand Like Me, and the creator of the Brand Like A Girl workshop format. Her work focuses on startup positioning and personal branding for founders and leaders, with a particular commitment to female entrepreneurship. She holds a PhD from Sofia University and developed her Minimum Viable Brand™ framework through her doctoral work.

AT A GLANCE

Munich, Germany
Interviews in English and Bulgarian
Startup positioning · Founder branding · Female leadership

Keynote topics

For startup conferences, leadership events and founder communities.

01 Your Brand Starts Before Your Traction

How early-stage founders can establish a clear identity and credible signals of value while their business is still taking shape. Introduces Raya’s Minimum Viable Brand™ framework.

For: Startup conferences, accelerators and founder programmes.

Takeaway: Identify the brand decisions that deserve attention early.

02 Your Reputation Is Part of the Business

How founders and leaders can connect personal visibility with the reputation of the company they are building, and decide what they want to become known for.

For: Founder communities, leadership events and business networks.

Takeaway: Connect visibility choices with a clear business purpose.

03 Who Gets Seen as an Expert?

How women can communicate the expertise they already have, articulate their contribution and build a public presence that reflects their ambitions.

For: Women’s leadership events, female founder communities and corporate networks.

Takeaway: Recognise which parts of your expertise need to become more visible.

04 Same Brand. Different Market.

What a brand needs to retain, and adapt, when it crosses borders. A practical perspective on identity, cultural expectations and trust across markets.

For: International startup events, export programmes and DACH/CEE networks.

Takeaway: Separate the brand’s consistent core from its local expression.

Brand Like A Girl

Personal branding workshop for female founders and leaders.

A practical personal branding workshop for female founders and leaders who want to articulate their expertise and make it visible. Built around clarity, confidence and courage, the session combines guided reflection, positioning exercises and discussion.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS WORK ON

Clarity

Identify your strengths, the people you want to reach and the contribution you want to be known for.

Confidence

Put your expertise into words and practise a personal positioning statement.

Courage

Choose a concrete next step for visibility that supports your professional or business ambitions.

A PRACTICAL RESULT

Participants work towards a personal positioning statement and a concrete next step for visibility. The focus and format are adapted to the audience and event programme.

BRING THE WORKSHOP TO YOUR EVENT

For conferences, women’s networks, accelerators and company leadership events. Share your audience, event theme and available session time to discuss the right format.

Also available for panel moderation, expert-led round tables and live pitch feedback with concrete next steps for startups.

Enquire: r.drenski@smartset.group

Selected event experience

Keynotes, workshops, round tables and expert pitch feedback.

BITS & PRETZELS 2026

Pitch Corner expert

As a Pitch Corner expert at Bits & Pretzels, Raya delivered actionable, mentor-led feedback and concrete next steps for participating startups, while showing the audience how experts evaluate a pitch.

Personal Branding for Female Founders

Raya led “Personal Branding for Female Founders” in the Round Table format at Bits & Pretzels, run by The Matchmakers.

SELECTED KEYNOTES DELIVERED

Baby Boss or How to Raise a Happy Startup

Fifteen Seconds Festival · Graz, Austria · June 2021

Passion for Brands

Do Work You Love · Munich, Germany · February 2020

From a P.R.O.J.E.C.T to a Thriving Business

Big & Growing Festival · Munich, Germany · November 2020 and March 2021

BRAND LIKE A GIRL WORKSHOPS

Brand Like A Girl has reached more than 1,000 attendees, with workshops delivered in New York, Graz, Maribor, Sofia, Munich, Vienna and Augsburg.

Discuss your event: r.drenski@smartset.group

Selected conversations

A selection of Raya’s podcast guest appearances.

Productivity Mastery Podcast

Topic: Personal branding, overcoming bias and articulating your strengths.

Episode: Brand like a GIRL

Published: 3 June 2022 | Language: English

Listen on Spotify →

The Marketing Podcast

Topic: Clear B2B positioning, meaningful differentiation and Minimum Viable Brand.

Episode: You Can’t Buy Something You Don’t Understand — Why Most B2B Brands Say Nothing

Published: 8 September 2026 | Language: English

Listen on Spotify →

Успех без граници

Topic: Starting again in Germany and helping women build their personal brands.

Episode: Еп. 79 с Рая Дренски, бранд стратег, Мюнхен

Published: 20 October 2026 | Language: Bulgarian

Listen on Spotify →

HER FUND Talks

Topic: How branding helps female founders communicate value and build investor trust.

Episode: Branding as the Missing Glue Between Female Founders and Funding

Published: 13 November 2025 | Language: English

Watch on YouTube →

MEDIA AND SPEAKING ENQUIRIES

For media, share your topic, format and deadline. For event bookings, include the date, location, audience, session format and budget range.

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