



Branding YOU!

Building Your Client Pipeline

Brand names come in many styles. Such as “BIC” pen, “Toyota” automobile, “Lee” jeans, “Reebok” shoes, IBM, UPS, etc. Certainly companies with long-established, widely-recognized brand names don't overestimate their value, spending millions of dollars in advertising every year not to directly promote sales of specific products, but simply to keep their brand names in front of the public. Look at Coke-a-cola has an estimated brand equity value of over \$156 billion, making Coke the number one brand in the world. This is amazing for a company that sells sugar and water in a can. But there is actually a brand with a higher brand value than Coke. What is it? Stand up and look in the mirror. The greatest brand in the world regarding your business model is YOU.

Banks, lenders and real estate have always had an uneasy relationship especially in the current real estate economy. Over the past several years, working with brand name mortgage companies regarding a short sale has been a roller coaster ride and in many cases the end results was a disaster. Consumer confidence has been low for months and months.

Survey

LivePerson, Inc. (NASDAQ: LPSN), a leading provider of real-time intelligent engagement solutions, November 1, 2012 announced the results of its 2012 Holiday E-Commerce Survey. The survey shows that 63% of respondents are planning to do a majority of their holiday shopping online, and also reveals that there is a strong preference among shoppers for using live chat over other engagement channels. The survey focused on holiday shopping habits of 500 respondents and their attitudes and preferences regarding online tools and channels such as live chat, social media and mobile devices. All respondents were over the age of 18 and have shopped online at least twice in the past three months. Jeremy Sokolic, Head of Marketing, LivePerson stated “By intelligently connecting with online visitors, at the right time and through their preferred channel, businesses can exceed consumer expectations this holiday season, enabling them to drive more conversions and greater customer loyalty as a result.” What is this survey saying? Consumers still want to talk to a live-person before making a major decision.

Real Estate Sales

Technology, a shrinking world economy, intensified price pressure, the commoditization of products and services and faster communication has changed how we sell today yet many organizations and many salespeople continue to employ simple-minded practices that no longer work. Your role as a sales professional today is to systematically and consistently increase the number of customers who choose you to be their #1 real estate service provider. You must bring every resource your company has into play and leverage those resources to create competitive advantage.

Selling is Serving ...Selling is Service ... The most powerful word in selling is YOU.

What does this mean to you?

- People have more information than ever before
- Prospects can get information about you and your offering before you have the chance to present your message
- You have less time to get your prospect's attention
- More salespeople are competing for the same prospects
- Prospects attention span is shorter
- You face more barriers that stand between you and your prospect
- You need to differentiate yourself from everyone else who sells the same service as you
- Your margin for error is getting smaller every day
- You must be willing to change, grow and study your trade now more than ever before

Sellers sell and buyers buy because they want their needs met not ours. This is a huge point to bear in mind because quite simply if you were interested in buying a house today, you'll want what you feel is best for your own needs, your budget, your circumstances and position in life. These considerations will determine what you'll buy. Therefore, selling today is client-centered by focusing on the needs and desires of the prospect, value and persuasion. It's about how you can efficiently and concisely provide solutions that specifically address a prospect's unique set of problems.

Value refers to "extra" feature(s) of an item of interest (product, service, person, etc.) that go beyond the standard expectations and provide something "more" while adding little or nothing to its cost. If you want to add power to your persuasion, personalize every part of your brand and marketing presentation to meet your prospect's personal needs, wants and goals.

What is a Brand?

To understand branding, it is important to know what brands are. A brand is the image of a specific service or product that consumers connect with, by identifying your name, picture, logo, slogan, or design of the company. Branding is when your image is marketed so that it is recognizable by more and more people, and identified with a certain service when there are many other companies offering the same service.

Brand-driven companies know subconsciously it is first an internal activity that comes from the heart of the business straight to the heart of the consumer. Brand design in the new economy is more about meaning than marketing. Branding has now become a common term used in selling.

A strong brand is crucial for improving sales, strengthening the customer base and loyalty, and enhancing business performance. And in today's world of endless choices, real estate professionals have to offer distinct value propositions to convince sophisticated brand-savvy consumers.

Sometimes the strategic direction is clear, other times it's far from apparent even to those at the top of an organization. In the mad rush to manage change, to create powerful brands and brand images, companies spend tons of money reinventing themselves with ambitious marketing and advertising plans long before taking the most important first step -- knowing exactly what it is they are seeking to build upon -- their brand's foundation.

Branding results is developing your reputation as "the go-to" place or person that consistently delivers excellence to new and repeat customers. We're seeing more of an emphasis on brands building emotional relationships with consumers because it's powerful and it works.

When you do it, you have a much stronger affinity, a much stronger business, much stronger growth and much stronger results. Building your brand today comes about on the experiences your customers have with your company based on their own perceptions and the trust a consumer has in you.

Understanding the Intangible Aspects of a Strong Brand

The true power and meaning behind great brands lie more in their intangible values than in their tangible features.

Intangible values refer to things such as customer preferences, bonding and loyalty, your brand's credibility and reputation, the associations and of your image brand, the core values behind your brand, and even in employees' loyalty and belief in your brand.

These intangible values form an invisible, but potent support network behind your business offerings. They add to your services perceived value and as a result, they act to both establish and differentiate the brand from competitors.

As real estate professionals we know that customer recognition of our business name is important. Did you know, however, that the clearer your overall business identity brand is, the more likely your business is to survive and thrive? From a customer-centric point of view, the fact that your business is different doesn't matter. Until you as a marketer of homeownership and housing solutions can present what's unique about your business to the seller or buyer's behavior you're behind the curve -- still marketing in the 20th century. In order for your brand to be clear to your customers, it has to be consistently displayed in every aspect of your business.

The main benefit of branding is that prospective buyers and sellers are much more likely to remember your business. Therefore it makes sense to understand that branding is not about getting your target market to choose you over the competition, but it is about getting your prospects to see you as the only one that provides a solution to their problem.

There is still a lot of fear and uncertainty in the marketplace. It is crucial that every consumer has the best information on which to base their buy or sell decision. Consumers do not want to be sold anything today, they want to be educated. Strive to exceed the consumer's expectation in services, available products and technology.

Does Branding Really Matter?

Real estate professionals must change their focus to connections through identity branding. The words “brand” and “branding” have become so abundant in the business world I’ll bet it’s a fair statement to say you’ve heard these words thrown around recklessly from time to time. You probably wondered privately “does branding really matter?”

At the risk of overly simplifying, let’s use the word “identity” in place of brand for the rest of our study. I think it’s a far better word with more relevant meaning. Organizations, company owners, key personnel, products and services all have an identity.

People are highly affected by visual elements. Remember the saying about "a picture is worth a thousand words?" That is why using a consistent visual image is so important and a sense of consistency concerning what you do, who you are, what services and products you offer is vital in today's congested marketplace.

It’s through your identity branding that you build a relationship in the minds of customers by defining what your value offer represents.

But this is only half the equation - the more purposeful component to identity building is the ability to influence customer behavior to engage your services. Endless logos and ad making will not get you there.

Establishing a clear and memorable identity is the first step, and is probably one of the easier steps you'll be taking. The hard part is maintaining that identity consistently, especially when your business begins to grow.

Identity Branding

The brand reflects the personality of the owner (YOU). An ‘identity brand’ is in many ways identical with your reputation. It refers to the way other people see you. Are you a genius? An expert? Are you trustworthy? What do you represent? What do you stand for? What ideas and notions pop up as soon as someone hears your name?

Identity Branding Keeps You

- Current in your chosen field
- Opens doors of opportunity for you
- And creates a lasting impression on sellers, buyers, partnerships and alliances

Identity branding can be an easy process. Why? You already know who you are and what you are not. Strong brands are consistent; it's easy to be consistent in who you are.

A New Era Begins

Certainly, people will continue to adopt brands, just as they always have. Four things in particular must be central to identity brand marketing in an era powered by connection, relationship and bonding.

- Name - The relationships people want are connections with other people
- B2B - Business to Business - Local community connection in forming partnerships and alliances
- B2C - Business to Consumer - Connecting to community members where you live and serve
- “B” Behavior - The more purposeful component to identity building is the ability to influence customer behavior to engage in your services

Building Your Identity Brand

The most important job that you have today is to be the President of your own brand in gaining a competitive edge in motivating consumers to action. After all, your personal brand is the source of a promise to your prospect, customer and/or client. It's a foundational piece in your marketing communication and one you do not want to be without. The truth is personal branding is easier than company branding. Why, because if you believe in your talent, in your skills and ability - it's easier to sell what you believe in. Your image is already created - you just have to market it.

So what does it mean to “brand yourself?” Branding yourself is the process of developing a “mark” that is created around your personal name publicizing yourself via all avenues your personal value, mission, skills and services offered with total clarity and consistency. It's especially important to highlight your uniqueness in some easy to remember way, so people will think of you and what you do and seek you out for your knowledge and expertise. The end goal is that the personal brand that you develop will build your reputation and help you to grow your network in a way that interests others.

Identity Brand Development and Strategy

Engagement - To attract and hold the attention of; engross, to win over or attract; to draw into; get involved

Collaboration - Harnessing the power to engage people, solve problems, and manage change in business

Connect - To join, unite; to establish communication between; to cause to be associated, as in a personal or business relationship

The best person to manage your career is YOU, and the best person to market your talents, accomplishments and value is YOU! So let's build your identity brand.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

Who are you? Where is your passion? What is it that you want your brand to represent? Brand discovery is not only figuring out what you want to represent today, but what you want to represent for the rest of your life. You must become comfortable talking about yourself in this way to build your identity brand.

More importantly, are you prepared to talk about yourself in packaging your talents and accomplishments, showcasing them and presenting your value externally within your chosen field and community? I hope you answered yes. How can you develop this ease, confidence and comfort that is considered very difficult by many people? The first step is to change your mindset and embrace personal branding as a required skill in taking charge of your career and executing a successful career management strategy. Let's walk through some techniques for developing this strategy.

To create your personal brand and effectively market yourself can be carried out by the “3 P's”; preparation, packaging and presentation.

1. Preparation is to personify, differentiate, describe, define and identify your brand.
 - Know your offer value - skills, competencies, strengths, unique characteristics, traits and/or experiences you have to offer that set you apart

- Content expertise – establish specific niches and provide trusted information
- Differentiating factors – Building a network, maintain and nurture long lasting partnership, alliances and trusted resources
- Goals – create a mission for yourself for short and long term. Have a plan.

2. Packaging is to create and build your brand. Design and patent your message.

- Create and articulate a clear and concise message
- Maintain an up-to-date resume and bio
- Create a history of accomplishments
- Obtain references, quotes and testimonials
- Serve on committees and boards
- Cross sell other services and products
- Stay current in your field - Embrace continued education

3. Presentation is to illustrate and present you message through marketing efforts.

- Develop strong communication, active listening and interpersonal skills
- Practice your delivery again and again
- Practice professional etiquette
- Be pro-active and strategic with your efforts to be visible
- Never burn any bridges – always leave positive impressions!
- Deliver your brand with the utmost confidence. Confidence is how it all comes together – your preparation, your packaging and presentation!!

Personal Branding Will Help

- To build YOU as an industry expert or consultant in your chosen field
- To market yourself to other companies to enhance their value offerings
- To build your own credibility for future business, industry contracts and ventures
- Build a solid reputation within your industry
- Improve your perceived value in the marketplace

Building Your Pipeline

Leads are great, referrals are the BEST. For making the brand more known among people, one needs to build the reputation in the market. And for building the reputation one needs to interact with people and to solve their problems and maximum try to fulfill their requirements.

The world wants to hear what you have to say, if you aren't building your own brand, your company will suffer. It is best to not sound so much like a salesman, but more like an expert in your field who is offering their honest advice on something.

Here is What You Need to Get Started

- Purchase your own domain – Your website should consist of your own domain, preferably your name or something that describes what you do. How can you create your brand if you don't own YourName.com? – www.godaddy.com, www.dreamhost.com, www.register.com, www.nameboy.com
- Design Your Website - Be helpful by sharing links and resources that you know people will enjoy. Add 'asks an expert' to your website to answer questions about your profession or area of expertise.
- Places to place your brand is in the email or forum signature, website personal profiles (like Ning's) that allows you to fill in a short bio and list your website or blog and software-based personal profiles, like Skype.
- Arrange to have a BIO posted about yourself on Wikipedia, Knol, Squidoo and other user-generated media.
- Form your Blog using your own name. Post 2 to 3 blog posts per week. An active and effective blog means 2 to 3 posts per week around 500 to 700 words, discussing topics that surround your brand. Share those posts via Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. List your blog in pertinent website, blog and RSS directories. <http://sixrevisions.com/tools/top-free-online-blogging>
- Create a discussion forum about homeownership that you would moderate and participate in - www.forumotion.com, www.createforum.net
- Twitter Account. Create a Twitter account complete with photo. Once again use your name or something that describes what you do. You will then want to follow those that would have interest in topics surrounding your brand. Engage and interact - remember, don't just broadcast. <https://twitter.com/signup>
- Using Twitter use tools such as Twellow to find those that would be interest in the topics your brand represents, this will help to increase your following and attract them to your brand. I suggest trying to follow 5 to 10 per day. twellow.com
- Facebook Profile. Create your own Facebook profile. It must contain a photo (preferably the same one you use on Twitter), work history, and experiences. Be sure and post relevant items to your Facebook page. This is a great place to let your personality show. Invite colleagues, peers and friends to join you on your Facebook profile. <http://www.facebook.com>
- LinkedIn Profile - A LinkedIn profile is the digital version of your resume, portfolio and references. Don't be without one. Join groups that are of interests to your brand. Answer questions and be an active participant. Connect with those that would be interested in your cause or topic. www.linkedin.com
- Use Quora - A fairly new medium, but a great place to get to know those that would have interest in your brand. Invest time and answer questions. This will help in building your following and get your name out there. Quora is a great medium to show your expertise by answering questions. www.quora.com
- Tie together everything in a dedicated FriendFeed profile that allows people to follow your online activities from one source. www.friendfeed.com

If you want your company to succeed, become an expert in your field, claim a website under your own domain name, connect with the media, and build relationships with your audience. All these will establish the basis for a referral-based business in building your pipeline.

Connect Your Brand Strategy with Marketing

Once you have established your brand identity, you can plan how to get your message across and connect it to your marketing activities.

An entrepreneur these days can't afford to hide behind an impersonal website or hold up in the corner office. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, connect your customers to one another, and you, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Marketing Your Brand

Personal branding and marketing go hand in hand and are both crucial for managing and sustaining a future successful real estate career. Your ability to market your brand is a key part to setting yourself apart from the competition.

What is the difference between branding and marketing? Branding is what you are, marketing is what you do. Put simply, branding is the strategy, identity, message, and experience while marketing is publicity staging campaign, research, advertising or promotion. Marketing sells your brand to the world. Keep in mind a brand is what results from marketing consistency.

Marketing is a designed plan to reveal and motivate the consumer to act now. Promoting your personal brand will be an ongoing variety of efforts of managing and directing the flow of communication of services you provide.

Marketing will contribute to your brand exposure but the brand itself is bigger than any particular marketing effort. The brand is what remains after the marketing has swept through the room. It's what sticks in the consumer's mind associated with your service whether or not, at that particular moment, they employ your services or bought or did not buy a product from you.

As people begin to see your name and become aware of the benefit and knowledge that you offer, before you know it thousands of people will not only know who you are but they will begin to seek out your services and expertise. They will identify with your brand which is YOU.

When branding and marketing work tightly together, they will bring enormous benefits such as:

- Building relationships with potential customers
- Higher sales
- Loyal customers who not only recognize your brand but understand the qualities that make you better than the competition
- Premium commissions
- Mind share - customers think of you as the first and only choice
- Fencing off competitors and protecting your market share

Changes in Marketing

Today's consumer can be difficult to engage and connect. They have already done their homework before contacting you. Overwhelmed with more information than ever before, consumers must be approached in a variety of new ways. Reaching consumers in today's world takes a whole new mindset, a new set of tools and compliance with rules.

Marketing is no longer about creating demand measured in sales, but building lasting relationships measured in trust. Consumers are flooded with over 3,000 marketing messages a day and now have the power to determine and control what they allow into their heads. Technology has finally shifted the power from the marketer to the

consumer. There's no going back to the old ways of doing things. Consumers now enjoy the ability to consume only the content they want and enjoy (sans the embedded marketing messages).

They have the tools to opt-out and bar any further interruptions from marketers plus they frequently use these same new tools to boycott or criticize any brand they find lacking in their trust.

You will not be able to create a one-shoe-fits-all marketing message. Your marketing campaign must be tailored to the type of seller, buyer or corporate client you are targeting. You have one small window of opportunity to capture a consumer's attention and inspire them to learn more about your brand and offerings.

For Example

- Positioning your brand in relation to potential customers and competitors
- Creating marketing programs and messages by target audience
- Identify which marketing efforts to focus on, e.g. mainstream media, direct mail, social media, YouTube videos, webinars, community service events, etc.
- Decide what messages to run on which media
- Use the same images, logos and writing style across all communication channels, to include e-mail campaigns as well as print materials
- Speak to the issues and challenges of your audience using language and a tone that will resonate with them

Eight Key Ingredients of Lasting Brands

- Focus on the customer – attentive service
- Actively manage the people who represent your brand
- Separate the personal from the professional, i.e. Facebook business page
- Conduct a taste test. Does your business live up to your brand promise?
- Implement a “customer survey”
- Provide 24/7 instant access to information – make it easy to maneuver around your website
- Be sure your customer service is friendly and consistent
- Monitor social media websites and blogs, as well as customer review websites (such as Yelp), for positive and negative comments about your business

Today's Exceptional Service

An emotionally satisfying customer experience can be powerful, especially these days when service expectations are so low. Nothing is more valuable to your business than a great impression that lasts beyond a single transaction. Remember that today's exceptional service means customer loyalty and repeat business over time and better yet, great word-of-mouth for your services.

The key, of course, is being able to deliver what you say you'll deliver, when you say you'll deliver it, whether it's your product, service or some kind of positive result.

Responsibility to your clients doesn't end as soon as you make the sale. You need to keep them engaged.

Make sure your sellers and buyers, partnerships and alliances are connected with you in all of your various social media outlets and update these outlets with information relevant to them. Provide them with ongoing activities, special events, new local businesses and community information.

Continue Highlighting Your Brand

- Produce your own podcasts (audio or video)
- Dedicate video channels for you on sites like YouTube
- Launch an online initiative related to your profession
- Participate in other online initiatives to get noticed
- Put out press releases when you have a newsworthy accomplishment to share
- Write op-ed articles for mainstream media
- Start a newsletter about your field of expertise
- Conduct free webinars about up and coming topics
- Grow an affiliate network to promote your services, which means they're also promoting you
- Leave insightful comments on related blogs

Now that you have the tools it's time to start building your brand! Remember this will take consistency and dedication, but you can do it. Once your brand has been defined, make sure that the little things -- the way you dress, your body language, how you behave with co-workers, the emails you write -- are consistent with your brand message. Be sure to keep co-workers, colleagues, clients, and friends updated about what you are doing.

Other Resources

- www.toggl.com
- www.osalt.com
- www.FunctionFox.com
- www.YouPublish.com – sell your 3book
- www.skype.com – record your podcast
- www.blogtalkradio.com
- www.constantcontact

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