

How to Achieve Success in Building Your Brand



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The Importance of Building a Brand

Introduction

In today's fast paced society with readily available technology and so many businesses and people competing to be number one; it is imperative to establish a personal brand. A brand defines who an individual is and the way people see business owners. Are they a contributor to the community? An expert in their field? The brand should establish these attributes. Upon hearing a name, is it associated with trustworthy, honest, ethical, sincere, dependable, or result orientated?

Good branding will prompt others to recognize the person or brand as a credible source, and in return be more inclined to listen to the values, opinions, and services offered. The real estate industry is a prime example of personal branding importance.

Marshall Brown, founder, and CEO of Marshall Brown and Associates gave great advice at the National Land Conference in March 2016. Brown said, "Your brand should be a unique promise of value, it should separate you from your peers." He recommended revisiting branding on a regular basis by measuring tactics to make sure good results are being seen, along with forming an advisory committee for accountability.

There are four major points related to branding that every professional should look at:

1. How to brand or change your image.
2. The importance of communicating with people.
3. Self-promotion.
4. Ensuring long-term success.

Branding or Changing Your Image

Sometimes things simply go wrong and there is bad publicity to deal with. In the event of bad publicity, work hard to make the situation right and towards establishing a clean reputation representing a respectable business. Keller Center for Research at Baylor University surveyed consumers asking what they expect from a real estate agent, and one of the three main things consumers want is an agent holding a good reputation. This makes Benjamin Franklin's quote, "It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it.", ring true for branding purposes.

The image portrayed to potential clients through branding is important as you think about how current clients perceive you. Branding is established by the values represented and how people identify with and relate personally to your brand. Most potential clients want to work with an agent who will put ethics as number one and is an expert in their field. William Arruda, a New-York based branding expert and author of *Career Distinction; Stand Out by Building Your Brand* says, "Creating a personal brand starts with knowing yourself. What personal strengths can you leverage to attract clients and develop ingenious results-regenerating solutions? Personal

branding is about taking things you are good at and using them to help others.”



Determine what you, as an agent, want to hold an expertise of and educate yourself in that field. Web-based learning makes continuing education courses in any field easier than ever to find. After determining your field of expertise, use it as a marketing strategy and market you and your brand as the expert of that field. As the “Farm and Ranch” expert in your area you will be the trusted source for information so it is important that you back up your branding with knowledge and make this the primary field of study for your continuing education classes.

Make your brand personable by selling yourself and your personality. Clearly state and define who you are. Include your hobbies and anything you love to do to portray yourself as an agent. Prospective clients want to interact and do business with someone identifiable and trustworthy. The transparency of your marketing makes you, as an agent, more approachable.

The Importance of Communicating with People

While building your brand it is very important that you are responsive and have accessible communication with any potential clients. In today's world, social media has opened avenues of communication that have not always been available, in return, clients feel a more personal connection with business owners.

In a survey done by Redfin Real Estate Brokerage and published in Realtor Magazine, it is stated that, “The majority of buyers surveyed also indicated that they valued responsiveness in a real estate agent. In fact, it was the most sought-after trait for an agent among buyers. Forty-seven percent of buyers surveyed rated responsiveness as key- even over professionalism, local expertise, and experience.”



Networking, communicating, and building relationships with people of every genre is also important. Look for ways to help others. Opportunities are often available to volunteer to be a part of a committee or to simply be involved in a positive event for the community. These endeavors go a long way in positive branding. Remembering names and small details and following up by acknowledging those details when you have interactions with clients will authenticate you and your brand. The hard work of networking and reaching out to those in in your community will pay off when you are recommended to others in need of a professional in your field. Align yourself with people of influence in your professional field, as well as influential people in your community as they will refer clients to your brand as well.



The society we live in yearns for instant gratification. Social media and other technology have made connecting instantly with others a reality. As you grow your network these instant connections can get overwhelming. Set expectations inside your contact information stating it is your intention to respond promptly. As a back up have someone designated to respond on your behalf if you are with other clients or away for personal reasons. A “FAQ” or frequently asked questions link, is a great way to cover common questions and information.



Another great way to communicate is through video and photos. Make yourself relatable to others with personal photos. This transparency gives the clients a sense of knowing you before they have met you. Keep photos up to date and make sure they are high quality. Utilize YouTube to give expert advise in a very personable way or post video of you in action doing what you do best.



Self-Promotion

While establishing your personal brand, it is key to promote yourself and who you are. This is one hundred percent necessary to establish your identity and to get recommendations from others. A professional website is priority and should be budgeted for accordingly as it is the first impression of you on the internet. Blogging on your website about new developments or information in your field of expertise will further your efforts to become the expert in your area.

Be present and active on social media. Keep posts upbeat, personal and transparent and in return you will be perceived as trustworthy and real. Clients are not looking for business promotion on social media, they are looking to see the genuine you. Aaron Agius wrote an article for Entrepreneur Magazine that featured research from Econsultancy showing 71 percent of brands plan to invest more heavily in social media in the coming year to reach new followers and build brand reputation.

Business cards are still a great tool for self-promotion. Your branded business card should stand out amongst others in your field. Showcase a high quality photo of yourself as well as branding that is memorable.

As a professional, take pride in how you look. Wear clothes that fit and compliment your body. Remember that first impressions are the most important when meeting with new clients or attending social settings.

Lastly, take the time to write a good biography. Establish your personal and professional identity and credibility. In an article written by Sandra Mills on a personal branding specialist blog, Mills tells what a biography should look like when she says, "A bio is written in third

person and essentially describes whom you are. According to the American Marketing Association, your biography should show your best career achievements, define your personal brand, and include any information regarding your education and credentials along with provide contact information. Your biography should also include a professional image.”

Long Term Success

Once your personal brand is established, do not let it go stale. Schedule time to remain active in all the areas you have worked so hard to establish your brand. Budget time and finances needed to remain the knowledgeable expert in your field. Keep changing with technology advances and stay ahead of competitors by finding the newest ways to reach and communicate with potential clients. While you work to separate yourself from your competitors, also keep in mind the importance of establishing good working relationships with them. Remain active in your community and continue growing your network. Surround yourself with like-minded people and show appreciation for those helping you to succeed.

Conclusion

It is not too late to start a branding plan and if you impliment the four steps discussed it should not be an overwhelming process. Establish or change your image to brand yourself and your business. Develop strong communication skills and allign yourself with people of influence. Promote who you are personally and become the expert in your field. Lastly, be comitted to continuing your education and open to change in order to keep your brand fresh.

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