

PERSONAL BRANDING 101



KRISTA CLIVE-SMITH

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Branding is one of those nebulous topics that you hear thrown around a lot but you may not know exactly what it's about. In the traditional sense, branding refers to ranchers searing a unique symbol on to the hides of their cattle. At that point, the stamp is an identifier. It establishes ownership and marks the rancher's territory to the outside world. When the rancher's cattle are shown to perspective buyers or judges, all of a sudden the brand represents more than just someone's property, it symbolizes all of the quality control standards and the ranching philosophies of the owner. Over time, the ranch is going to build a reputation that is based on the level of quality and the value that it consistently delivers.

In more recent times, marketers have co-opted the term to describe the process of searing an image in to the minds of consumers through the company's logo, slogan or tag line, marketing materials and advertising copy. But it's more than just that. Branding is not strictly a function of the marketing department of a business. The brand must be infused in to every fibre of the organization's being and must be championed by everyone involved, regardless of their position within the company. The person answering the telephone is just as responsible for the way the brand is perceived in the market place as the glossy ads that promote the product.

Branding is really achieved through the consistent experience the consumers have with the company, or it's products or services. The definition of a brand varies but I believe the definition to be "The entire set of perceptions, true or untrue, that a person holds about an individual, company, product or service." Notice that I did say true or untrue because let's face it, we're human beings. The old adage about not judging a book by it's cover may sound good in theory, but in reality it's rarely applied. When you're browsing through books in a bookstore for example, how do you decide which one you're going to buy? You may be looking for a book on branding and you'll likely find many on the subject. You pick them up one by one and you read the back cover. But you don't pick up all the books in that section do you? Chances are you picked up the ones that appealed to you when you looked at the front cover. So branding your business is like designing the cover of the book that is you or your company. The goal is to design a cover that accurately depicts the content of the text so readers know what type of book they're buying. Authentic branding works the same way, by externally reflecting your true inner essence.

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While a brand is the entire set of perceptions that a person holds, the act of branding is about proactively shaping those perceptions. So when we are building a brand, it's not just the perceptions that people hold about you or your company, it's the art of influencing how others perceive you.

Charles Gibbons once said, "Your level of success in life is directly proportional to your level of planning and control." Building your brand is like building a house. Its phases of development follow a certain order, ensuring that once built it will remain standing, even in spite of fierce weather conditions. The four phases of developing your brand are as follows:

Phase 1- Defining

Phase 2 - Positioning

Phase 3 - Packaging

Phase 4 - Championing

Continuing with the analogy of building a house, the corresponding four phases in the designing and building of your new house are as follows:

Phase 1 - Laying a Foundation

Phase 2 - Choosing the lot and your new neighbourhood

Phase 3 - Building Your Home: Finishing, Decorating, and Landscaping

Phase 4 - Choosing who to invite in to the inner sanctum that is your new home.

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Different people will have different levels of interest in your new home, it's the same with your brand. You and your family will care very much how structurally sound the house is whereas your friends will probably focus on how it looks, the design, decor, furnishings and landscaping. This is the same with your brand. You and your family will care most that you are happy, healthy and structurally sound as a company while others will notice and judge you based on the physical appearance and the personality of the brand image on the outside.

The beautiful thing about the 4-Phase system of brand development is that it starts with a solid blue print, then pours a solid foundation, takes shape with the added flair of packaging and maintains the image with the support of a solid network. This concrete step by step plan ensures that nothing is missed. With this basic understanding of the task at hand, let's get started. It's time to start shopping for floor plans!



GET NOTICED.
BE REMEMBERED.

CREATING A PERSONAL BRAND STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

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To learn more about creating a personal brand strategy for success, pick up your copy of Get Noticed. Be Remembered. on Amazon or at www.kristaclivesmith.com