

Brand Moi™

By Karen Post

Make your Mark and Succeed.

Personal Branding for Professionals.

For any professional, a strong identity and a distinct market position are key factors in achieving optimum business success. They can supersede academic credentials, experience and even your skill sets as a competitive edge. The power of perception allows you to make a unique mark in the minds of your industry, peers, customers and prospects.

Companies and organizations worldwide spend enormous resources on building their brand. They know that a sound brand adds value to their existence, secures customer and employee loyalty and enhances profits. For professionals, the same fundamental brand building principles apply. A personal brand can deliver significant professional benefits, allowing you to command higher fees, earn more money, increase your market share and even enjoy a celebrity status.

Whether you are referring to a product, company, organization or an individual professional, a brand is a mental imprint, which conveys a personality, promise and unique position. Brands are visual, emotional, rational and cultural. Powerful brands start at the core of one's existence and spread throughout every point of contact with their target audience.

When you see a Volvo, you think safety, when you fly Southwest Airlines, you think cheap fares and when you ship FedEx, you think overnight. Some brands are so strong that we as consumers actually replace the common noun with their brand name, like Xerox—photo copies, Jell-O—flavored gelatin and Kleenex—facial tissues. These established brands make selection easier and

enhance the value and satisfaction from the experience. As consumers, we have a distinct mental image of these companies or products. When someone says your name, what do people think? That's the essence of Brand Moi™. It is your personal mark that makes you special, memorable, desirable and worth money in the bank.

Brands are not just for big companies.

Personal branding, just like big company branding starts with a value-based strategic scheme and is followed by a tactical action plan. The universal branding principles are: know who you are, be unique, target those who want what you have, deliver a great experience and always speak loudly even when you whisper.

Brand Moi™ is your personal identity or brand. Build your brand plan from your core being and always be consistent with your values, or consider a new profession.

- 1) Start with defining what you offer the market, your brand proposition. This applies to everyone from business people to sales professionals to corporate employees. Do you cut hair? Provide financial advice? Or sell houses?
- 2) Articulate your brand promise. This may include your talents, skill set, competencies and attitude.
- 3) Clarify your unique brand position. What makes you different and distinct from your competition? Don't even think about saying service and quality, that answer is far too general.
- 4) Describe your brand personality, just like you would an acquaintance. Include qualities, attributes, characteristics and traits.

Developing a personal brand strategy is usually the toughest part of creating a Brand Moi™. As you answer these questions make a list of whatever comes to mind, then ask your peers, customers and industry colleagues for their feedback. Filter through everything, follow your head and heart and strive to end up with a simple, concise snapshot of YOU!

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“Land your Brand™” with a focused tactical action plan. This is where many professionals can sink their brand in a minute if they don’t adhere to their brand plan with passion and commitment. Remember, audiences derive their impressions from what they see, hear, read, experience and even smell! All your points of contact with your target market should pass your strict brand standards code. And don’t try to be all things to all people. Stick with your core purpose.

• **Small names are big.**

If you’re serious about building a powerful Brand Moi™, I would start with your professional name. Can people pronounce it? Does it have a meaning that would hurt what your brand promises? For example, I would consider a name change if your name were Tom Paine and you practiced dentistry. If your brand plan includes achieving celebrity status in your industry or in a mass market, short, memorable names are best.

• **What they see they believe.**

Next I recommend auditing your graphics and visual presentations. This includes every piece of correspondence that you can control. If you are an independent professional this means your web presence, business cards, letterhead, thank you cards, proposals, advertising and all business forms. If you work for a company that has their own brand, this may mean internal communications and personal correspondence to your customers and peers. Your wardrobe and personal appearance express your brand everyday. Make sure it’s saying what you intended.

• **Speak loudly even when you whisper.**

Audio points of contact are also brand important! From your recorded message on your phone, to your on-hold noise, to how you answer your phone, they all add to your brand imprint.

• **Deliver a great experience, every time.**

Doing business with you should be a rewarding, memorable experience. Your environment, whether your place of business or where you host events, should be brand sensitive and support your message. Signage, your office, your desk and the cleanliness of your car speak about you also. All elements of your customer service and interactions with your market reinforce your brand.

• **The written word is the language of your brand.**

Do your written documents scream your brand? Are they consistent with your brand promise, personality and unique position? If not, it’s edit time. Your writing style, choice of

words and content are the foundation to your brand communication. This means emails, proposals, letters, speeches and by-line articles.

Brand Moi™ is essential. If you compete with anyone for anything, you need a brand. Just like the products on the grocery store shelves, it’s a cluttered, aggressive environment. It’s human nature to gravitate to people you like, trust and can relate to. Connect to their souls. Stand out. Be heard. Make your mark and tout the very unique and special being you are!

About the author.



Karen Post, The Branding Diva™, is an author, national speaker, coach and consultant on branding, marketing and communication issues. She founded her first company at 22. Without any formal education in her chosen field of marketing/communications, she built two successful enterprises: an advertising agency and a litigation communication company. For nearly 20 years she has provided counsel and communication programs for individuals, start-ups; local, regional, and national companies; politicians; and nonprofit organizations.

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