

the solopreneur zone

the resource place for solo-entrepreneurs

To Brand or Not To Brand?

What's in a Brand?

By now, you've probably heard of the marketing phenomenon called Branding. A brand is simply an image, a perception in the minds of your potential clients. Ask most people about McDonalds or MTV and they will accurately chose the same words to describe the brand as the marketers from these companies hope they will -- these are very distinct brands.

Ask the same people about Oprah Winfrey or Martha Stewart and you'll notice the same consistency with which we all describe these two women. They too are brands. Personal Brands. Until recently, the concept of a brand was only associated with a product. Today, even (and especially) service providers like you have a brand (even if you haven't made any effort to consciously create a brand).

A brand is simply the image that appears in the client's mind when she hears your name, sees your website or reads something you've written.

Don't Want to be a Brand?

I've noticed that many Solopreneurs are resistant to the idea of being a brand. It feels too "sales-y" or manipulative to them. Remember that a brand is simply a perception in the eyes of your potential clients. Since they will form this perception regardless of whether you put any time into your brand, why not help them truly understand you and what you have to offer instead of trying to piece it together themselves from the random information they are able to collect on their own?

You Already are a Brand

Whether you put any thought or effort into it or not, you are already a brand. Stop for a moment and think about what information potential clients currently have to go on in developing a perception of you and your business. Do you consistently put out the same clear message, or do you often re-word your message or try different ways of reaching your clients, very rarely doing the same thing twice?

If your clients and potential clients were asked to describe you and your business in 3 adjectives, which would they choose? Would they be the same ones you'd prefer they choose?

Consistency and Persistence Help Grow Your Brand

One of the best ways to help clients identify your brand is to be consistent and persistent in sharing your message. Marketing experts will tell you it takes between 7 to 21+ impressions for a potential client to even notice you. If you are haphazardly sharing what you offer, you will likely go unnoticed -- you haven't made enough consistent impressions to show up on a client's radar.

When you share a consistent image again and again, you'll also tap into the "I know her from somewhere" phenomenon. When your target market sees something from you on a regular basis (whether they notice it consciously or not) they begin to form an impression that you "must be good" because they've seen you so often.

Developing Your Brand

How do you go about developing your brand? First, assess what your current brand is. Next, spend time thinking about how you want to be perceived by clients. What do you need to do make it easy for potential clients to identify you with the image you want your brand to project? Do you need to make your message clearer and simpler? Do you need to have your website and materials match your brand better? Do you need to spend more time sharing your message with a more specific group so that they know they are your target market?

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- How do you think you are currently perceived by current and potential clients?
- How would you like to be perceived?
- List 5 adjectives that best describe you and your work with clients
- Which one word or phrase would you like your target market to use when describing you?
- What do you want to be known for?