

Develop a Personal Brand

Every time you suppress some part of yourself or allow others to play you small, you are in essence ignoring the owner's manual your creator gave you and destroying your design.

—Oprah Winfrey

Branding

Having established your target market and identified the urgent needs and compelling desires of your target market as well as the benefits of the investable opportunities you offer, you are ready to develop a plan for deciding how you want to be known in your market—in a compelling and unforgettable way. You will do this by developing a personal brand. Brands are not just for big corporations. In fact, a personal brand will serve as an important key to your success. A personal brand will help clearly and consistently define, express, and communicate who you are, whom you serve, and why you have chosen to dedicate your life and work to serving your target market so that you can attract your most ideal clients and repel those who are less than ideal. Personal branding is far more than just what you do. It is you—uniquely you. It allows you to distinguish yourself and what is unique about who you are and what you do from everyone else.

The way I see it, this is about making yourself known for one skill or talent. Master one domain and then you can do just about anything you want. Successful people find their style, build a brand based on it, and boldly express themselves through that brand. It's powerful and it makes you memorable.

Think about some of the most successful people you know. The entertainment industry is a great example. On the television show *In Living Color*, Jim Carrey established himself as a physical comedian using exaggerated body and facial expressions to make us laugh, while Jerry Seinfeld became well known for his intellectual comedic style of observing the obvious. Whoopi Goldberg took an entirely different approach, baring her soul in her standup routines talking about career, motherhood, and the perils of trying to have it all. She used stories and emotions to strike an emotional chord in us to make us laugh. Each of these very different comedic styles is attractive and preferable to different types of people. Some people love Jim Carrey's work, while others don't particularly care for it. The same is true for Jerry and Whoopi. The more bold, authentic, and concise your personal brand is, the more easily you'll attract those you're meant to work with.

That's how a personal brand works—it defines you, but first you must define it. Your personal brand will give you the ability to attract fun and exciting clients who understand and *get* you. And you *get* them. You can see that each of the comedians I described expanded their niche and repertoire after they became well known. Well, all of them except Jerry Seinfeld, who continued in a style that had always been successful for him.

Develop a personal brand that looks like you, thinks like you, sounds and feels like you—one that is instantly recognizable as your essence. It should be:

- Clear
- Consistent
- Authentic
- Memorable
- Meaningful
- Soulful
- Personal

There are two components to your personal brand. The first is your *who and do what* statement, which is based on:

- Specific problems you solve.
- Who you solve them for.
- What the results are.

The second is your *why you do it* statement, and it's based on:

- Who you are at your core.
- Why you do what you do.
- Why people should work with you.

Releasing Blocks

Before we begin to craft your personal brand, it's important to address any blocks you may be inadvertently creating that may hold you back from achieving success. I know it may seem unusual to discuss personal blocks as it relates to personal branding, but as I learned from Dave Buck of Coachville.com, most business problems are really personal problems in disguise. The following questions can help you gain clarity about how you want to be known in the world. Consider them seriously.

The greatest strategy for personal and business development on the planet is bold self-expression.

Are you fully self-expressed? Again, I know this may seem like an unusual question. But I ask it because in order to create a gutsy, passionate, ardent, provocative, courageous, valiant, vibrant, dynamic, luminous, and respected personal brand, you must be fully self-expressed. You can't hide behind the shingle that you've hung over your door and you can't water yourself down in any way, shape, or form. If you do, you won't be of interest to the people you're meant to serve.

Michael Gerber, in his best-selling *The E-Myth: Why Most Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It*, makes the distinction between working *on* your business—creating the framework that supports the business itself, such as setting up an automatic marketing system—and working *in* your business, which means working with the clients you serve. If I may be so presumptuous as to add one more element to Gerber's profound message: We must also work on ourselves. How we brand ourselves is a reflection not only of how we want to be known but also of our ability to work *on* our business, while working *in* our business and *on* ourselves.

Have you compromised yourself or watered yourself down in any area of your business? For example, have you been in a business situation where you walked away feeling like you settled for less or compromised your integrity? You may be thinking, “I don't sell out. I've never compromised or sold out.” If you haven't, you are unique. It's completely normal to compromise yourself or to be out of integrity from time to time. We all are.

It will serve you well to know exactly where you have run into trouble in the past. Since working independently and starting and running your own business is really challenging, you can eliminate a lot of pain and surprise right now by acknowledging the issues you may have buried or have had a difficult time confronting in the past.

1.3.1 Written Exercise: List the ways in which you've sold out, settled for less, or compromised your integrity in your business, either now or in the past.

1.3.2 Written Exercise: What about the flip-side? Tap into instances in your business life where you've felt alive and vibrant—fully self-expressed. Everything you did just flowed. Draw on all of your senses. What was happening at that time that made you feel so alive?

1.3.3 Written Exercise: Now compare the two areas, the ones where you sold out and the situations where you felt most fully self-expressed. How can you change your behavior to speak boldly and from a place of free-expression so that you're working in situations that make you feel fully self-expressed? How will you communicate to make sure you stop compromising or watering yourself down in the future?

1.3.4 Written Exercise: Start with a few situations (fairly comfortable ones) in which you could practice speaking from a bolder and more self-expressed place.

1.3.5 Written Exercise: Write down a few more situations (that seem a little more difficult) that you'd like to work up to speaking more boldly about.

There are two reasons for the exercises you're doing. The first is so you can help clients understand how you can help them. The second is so you can make sure that your personal and professional intentions are clear.

As I learned from Dave Buck, clear intentions allow you to gracefully and confidently move toward your goals. Conflicting intentions will undermine your success without your even knowing it. They will hold you back from your dreams. They are the mother of energy-drain and confusion. Anthony Robbins, author of *Unlimited Power*, calls the personal battle of conflicting intentions, "inner civil war." From a perspective of personal brand identity, conflicting intentions will eventually lead to a bland message and a less successful you.

Here's a story to illustrate this concept. My father is a highly accomplished psychiatrist. I have always had great respect for him and his work. And, above all, I've always wanted him to be proud of me and my accomplishments. That's natural, right?

When I first launched my service business, I spent lots of time getting clear on my offerings and how I would communicate them to the world.

And then I did just that—or so I thought. I let everybody know what I was up to. However, not too much was happening. I got a few clients, but as I mentioned earlier, I couldn't really pay the bills, and I certainly wasn't happy with the response I was getting. So a few months later, when I was at my wits' end, I did a formal evaluation of my brand. I started with my web site. I locked myself away and read every word on my web site from start to finish. I sat back in my chair, staring at the screen in amazement and shock. The entire feeling of the site was not really me—it was almost as if my father were talking. In fact, I was communicating what I thought he would approve of.

I am not my father. I'm certainly not a medical doctor. Not having his credentials, I shied away from being bold and brave and instead played it safe, secretly hoping that he would approve of what I was doing. The reason this is relevant is that when I started my business, I was focusing more on personal development issues—what some might call Life Coaching. I wanted to help people become happier and more successful. So I had two very conflicting intentions. One intention was to build a wildly successful business and the second (my conflicting intention) was to make my father proud. The underlying dynamic was not to do anything that he wouldn't approve of. But remember what I mentioned earlier: Most business problems are personal problems in disguise.

Even now, as a business coach and consultant, much of the work I do is centered on helping people move through personal problems so they can be successful in business. I'm not practicing psychology by any stretch of the imagination. However, I often relate to people on a very deep level. By remaining within conventional boundaries—the ones that I *thought* my father would approve of—I limited myself dramatically. I didn't give myself the freedom to be truly me. I was inhibited and unable to offer the full extent of my experiences, point of view, and passion. The result was a rather confusing and bland identity. And the truth is, I had no proof or real reason to believe that my father wouldn't approve of my being authentically me. In fact, just the opposite is true; he wouldn't want me to be anyone but me. It was just a good story for me to hide behind.

In order to set clear intentions for yourself, you must remove the conflicting intentions that you currently have. Your reality is created by your pre-

sent intentions. If you want to change your reality, you must change your intentions. My vision for you is that, through this book, the intentions for your life and your business will become more clear to you and to your clients.

1.3.6 Written Exercise: Identify one of your most important intentions as it relates to your business.

Example: I intend to book myself solid.

1.3.7 Written Exercise: Take a good hard look within to see if you can identify any potentially conflicting intentions for the intention you identified. These are likely to be subconscious and more difficult to identify, and they are nearly always fear based.

Example: If I book myself solid I won't have time for myself. Or, in order to book myself solid, I'll have to promote myself, and self-promotion will make me feel pathetic and vulnerable. Or maybe you want to book yourself solid but you *think* self-promotion is unattractive.

1.3.8 Booked Solid Action Step: Identifying and acknowledging your conflicting intentions is the first big step in releasing them. Awareness is key, but not always enough to prevent conflicting intentions from affecting and blocking our positive intentions. The next step in the process is to identify the underlying fears. Once you've identified them, you can begin to take steps to relieve them.

For this step it's critical that you very carefully choose one or two sincerely and highly supportive friends to share your new insights with. They must be truly supportive and willing to help you change. Often as we begin to make changes in our lives, whether business or personal, some of our most dearly loved friends and family can feel threatened by the process of change. While they may consciously want you to be successful, they may have their own subconscious conflicting intentions and be highly invested in wanting to maintain their own comfort zone by keeping you in yours. These are not the folks you want to ask for help with this exercise.

(Continued)

Share the intentions and their conflicting counterparts with one or two others and ask your friends to help you in recognizing whether these are genuine concerns or unfounded fears. Then brainstorm ways to address the problems.

While you can take this step on your own, often we're too close to our own fears to see them clearly. Having a supportive friend, mentor, or professional coach who has a bit more objectivity than we do can help to put them in perspective.

You Are Uniquely You

Often it's those qualities that make you uniquely you—the ones that come so naturally to you that you don't even think about them—that become the best personal brands. Susan's story illustrates the point.

A few years ago, Susan, a pleasant woman in her early forties, came to me and asked me to help her discover “what she was born to do” so she could launch her own business. It was a particularly tough time for her. She had recently been divorced and needed to support herself. As you might imagine, she was concerned about what she would do. Years earlier she had been a successful trader on Wall Street. Yet it had now been over 20 years since her glory days. I asked her, “What are your quirks?” “Quirks?” she replied. “I don't have any quirks.” She sounded moderately offended. “Okay,” I said, “Then tell me about your friendships; what are they based on?” Without a moment's hesitation she said, “My female friends are always asking me for advice on sex and intimacy.” “Interesting. Now we're getting somewhere,” I thought.

She told me about her unusual habit of giving scarlet-colored thongs (not the ones of the flip-flop variety) as gifts. Remember, this is the same woman who told me she didn't have any quirks. After more prodding and investigating this unique, special, and entertaining quirk, it became clear that she was fully self-expressed when she was thinking and focusing on how women 40 and over can be, should be, and are, remarkable sexual beings (and more). She decided, even though she would have to resolve many

conflicting intentions about doing so, that she was going to exploit her quirk and create *The Scarlet Thong Society*, a social club for women over 40 who want to acknowledge their sexual prowess.

You may not have scarlet thongs to hand out, but chances are you do have something unique, maybe even quirky, that you really want to express and that others will notice and respond to.

1.3.9 Written Exercise: To know which secret quirk or natural talent is waiting in the wings to bring you wealth, happiness, and unbridled success in your business, answer the following questions:

- How are you unique?
- What are three things that make you memorable?
- What are the special talents that you are genetically coded to do? What have you been good at since you were a kid?
- What do people always compliment you on?
- What do you love or never grow tired of talking about in your personal life?
- What do you want to say that you would never grow tired of talking about when you are asked about your work?

Many times we are too close to see the qualities or quirks that stand out to others. Send a few of these questions to different people in your life to get their responses about you and your personality. Not only will you start to see some of the same truths about who you are, but you'll get back the most touching and warm e-mails—I promise. Try it.

1.3.10 Booked Solid Action Step: Send an e-mail to five or more people (include friends, family, clients, neighbors, and acquaintances from all the different aspects of your life).

- Ask them to provide you with your top five personality traits or quirks.
- Ask for fun or unique experiences they've had with you.
- Tell them to be brave and not to be shy.

Remember that your work is doomed to fail if you don't love it and share it with the world. And here's the biggie: *When you're fully self-expressed, you will love marketing.* You won't have conflicting intentions about promoting yourself. You won't feel that the world is coming to an end when you get a rejection. You'll smile and move on to the next opportunity because your ability to express yourself is directly proportional to your level of confidence and vice versa.

With all of this new and insightful information about yourself, you should be thrilled that you've already made it through the challenge of choosing your path and being an independent business owner. That's no easy task. Keep all of these insights in mind as you begin to craft your own personal brand.

The Two Components of Your Personal Brand

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are two components to your personal brand:

1. Your *who and do what* statement.
2. Your *why you do it* statement.

I want you to laser-beam your focus on these two aspects of your personal brand until you feel totally and utterly fully expressed when you put words to your *who and do what* and your *why you do it* statements. The process may take a week or it may take a few months. It took me six months. The important thing is to give yourself the time to really give thought to it all.

Your Who and Do What Statement

Your *who and do what* statement lets others know exactly whom you help and what you can help them do. It is the first filter that people

will put you through when considering your services for hire. Your potential clients will look at it to see if you help people in their specific situation.

1.3.11 Written Exercise: Start with the basics. Keep it simple and straightforward. What is your *who and do what* statement? Whom do you help and what do you help them do? Refer to your target market from Chapter 2. The first time around, just come up with something accurate and clear for now. List as many possibilities as come to mind. Finish this statement, “I help . . .”

Example: I help . . . professional service providers book themselves solid.

Your Why You Do It Statement

Many others in your industry will share your *who and do what* statement. That’s why, after potential clients identify with your *who and do what* statement, they will want to know if they connect with you on an emotional or philosophical level. They’ll want to know if they connect with your *why you do it* statement—the reason you do what you do. It’s your job to make sure they understand exactly why you’re the person to serve their very specific, and personal, urgent needs and compelling desires. Those who resonate with your *why you do it* statement will feel it on a deep level and be strongly, almost magnetically, attracted to you. That will be the defining moment they need to decide whether to purchase your services, products, or programs.

In my business, I am known as “the guy to call when you’re tired of thinking small.” This is no accident; I’ve been saying this over and over since the day I realized that being “the guy to call when you’re tired of thinking small” was my *why I do it* statement. It’s based on the reason I do

what I do—to help people think bigger about who they are and what they offer the world.

Your *why you do it* statement is something you'll never get tired of. And the first time you hear someone refer to you by it, you'll want to cry tears of joy. I formulated one simple sentence that allows people to define me in a manner of my own choosing. I never get tired of saying it or hearing it because I really want people to think big, not only about who they are but about what they offer others. And most important, not only does it very deeply and truly mean something to me but it resonates with the people I'm meant to serve.

Your *why you do it* statement lets others know what it's like to be around you. It says something about who you are at your core, and it's the essence of what you want to achieve in the world. It's the bigger vision that is the inspiration for what you do in your business. It's the way in which you want to touch others' lives in a positive and meaningful way.

You may have noticed that my *why I do it* statement is much bigger than my *who and do what* statement. It may resonate with many people; professional service providers aren't the only ones who want to think bigger about who they are and what they offer the world. But I've chosen to offer my services to this inspired group of people, not to every single soul on the planet. Your *why you do it* statement is not about your target market; it's about the emotional connection you make with people. Many people serve the same target market you serve, but your *why you do it* statement is what will resonate with some people and not with others: It will resonate with those you're meant to serve.

Why have you dedicated your life to serving others? How do you want to make a difference?

If you don't want to make a difference, consider making your living as something other than a service professional. The operative word is service.

1.3.12 Written Exercise: It's time to step out of your comfort zone again. Set aside that inner critic and give yourself permission to think big—I mean really *big*, bigger than you've ever dared to think or dream before. Be your most idealistic, inspired, creative, powerful you. What is your purpose? What is your vision of what you hope to achieve through your work? Remember, your work is an expression of who you are. List whatever comes to mind.

1.3.13 Written Exercise: Keeping the above in mind, craft a minimum of three possible *why you do it* statements.

1.3.14 Booked Solid Action Step: If your *why you do it* statement is not immediately and easily identifiable, get together with a group of supportive friends or associates who know you well and ask them to brainstorm it with you. Often it's the things about you that are most natural and that you don't even recognize that become key elements of your *why you do it* statement. Having some outside input and a few more objective perspectives can make all the difference.

Roma Non è Stata Costruita in un Giorno (Rome Wasn't Built in a Day)

Neither was my personal brand. I went through many, many versions, even one a month, before I got to a *why I do it* statement that worked for me. I didn't get caught up in trying to find the perfect brand message or positioning statement. I didn't worry about it because I knew I could change it. I knew that creating a statement was a process and that I'd just keep changing it until I got there. If I didn't start with something, though, what would I have had? I'd have had nothing.

First I got clear on my *who and do what* statement, that "I help professional service providers get more clients."

What took longer was to get my philosophical *why I do it* statement. I worked really hard on trying to find mine. It took about six months. I thought about it every day, but the amazing thing was that it came to me by accident. I was with a bunch of people and we were masterminding and brainstorming about our businesses and everyone was talking about what they did. I was giving the others a hard time, teasing and questioning, asking, “Why would I hire you for that?” I was playing the Devil’s advocate until finally, one of the women gave it right back to me and said, “Yeah, well why would I hire you?” I blurted out, “Because I’m the guy to call when you’re tired of thinking small.” Suddenly the whole room went silent, as if everyone was holding their breath. After a few moments the same woman shouted out “Yes! That is *so you!*” Everyone in the room was cheering and the air was charged with excitement.

Even so, I didn’t really think much about it until a couple of weeks later as I was talking to a colleague about creating The Think Big Revolution (www.ThinkBigRevolution.com), a place where people could gather online to think bigger about who they are and what they offer the world. I was excited about it, but I questioned it: “I’m not sure about this *big* stuff. I came up with this brand positioning statement that I’m ‘the guy to call when you’re tired of thinking small,’ but I’m not sure about it. What’s the big deal about that?” She laughed and said, “Michael, are you dense?” I said, “Yes, but you’re going to have to be more specific.” She explained to me that she likes being around me because I help her think so much bigger about who she is and what she offers the world.

I realized then that because it was so natural to me to want to help people think bigger about who they are and what they offer the world, it didn’t seem like such a big deal to me. It took discussing it with others who weren’t as close to it as I was to get the perspective I needed. The exact thing that came most naturally to me was the thing that was drawing people to me, instilling in them the desire to purchase my products and enroll in my programs and seminars.

As I began using my *why I do it* statement to let others know why I do what I do, I found that the people for whom it resonated would immediately comment on how much they connected with it. Those who didn’t

get it, like one of my college friends, would ask me, “What’s this silliness about being the guy to call when you’re tired of thinking small?” That’s okay. It’s all about attracting those people who are meant to work with you. The rest will be attracted to someone with whom they will resonate, and you won’t end up with less than ideal clients.

Recall the story about the old man, the boy, and the donkey. The process of booking yourself solid isn’t about how to please as many people as possible. It’s about how to convey your own unique message to those who are waiting to hear it. That can’t be achieved with personal branding that’s been watered down in an attempt to appeal to everyone. It can be achieved only through bold, no-holds-barred self-expression. It’s about being uniquely you.

