

Branding Essentials for Coaches

Oprah has one! And so can you.

A strong and clear brand is vital to your business and, as a coach, understanding and leveraging your Personal Brand is even more essential today. Neiman Marcus and McDonald's have persuasive and impactful brands. Oprah's brand is stronger yet. But how do you create and leverage your own brand as a coach? This e-book guides you through the essentials of building a core brand and the four strategies that you can use to leverage your brand and catapult your coaching practice.

What is a brand?

A brand is the symbolic embodiment of all the information connected with a product or service. Typically, a brand includes the name, logo and other visual elements such as images, colors or symbols. Strategically and intentionally, a brand creates a set of expectations associated with a product or service which arise in the minds of people including employees, clients and consumers.

As a coach, the business that you are branding is often YOU - with all of your expertise, style and offerings. Therefore, an authentic coaching business brand follows closely to your own ideals, values, strengths and personality.

Uncover Your Essence

The first step to building your Personal Brand is getting grounded in your purpose and mission. Starting here ensures that your brand is built in alignment with who you are – not a brand that works for someone else but never feels like you. Authenticity (or lack of) shows up in the results and longevity of your brand.

This is the time for soul-searching. Who are you at your core? What is the impact of the work you do? What are your innate talents, quirks, preferences and secret weapons? What's your style and personality? What experiences and learnings do you bring? Who is your perfect client?

Do it now: Read "Now, Discover Your Strengths" and take the StrengthsFinder assessment.

Build Your Brand

Once you have the essence of your Personal Brand (it will evolve as you do), start gathering the physical elements of your brand. Try on words, images and colors to find a match for the essence of your Personal Brand. Make note of brands, words and images on billboards and websites. What speaks to you? What feels authentic to *your* brand?



Overwhelmed?

By starting from your essence and building from there, your Personal Brand will always be yours to create from – informing you and your business of your next steps, best practices and strategies.

Create a Personal Brand Statement summarizing your business brand. Begin creating your core branding pieces – the business name, logo, visual elements, business card and website.

Hire a graphic designer or branding specialist to translate your ideas into a professional “look and feel”. This is not the time to do-it-yourself. Hire a pro.

Do it now: Bookmark five websites that use colors, images or designs that resonate with you. Share these with your branding specialist or graphic designer.

The Four Strategies

STRATEGY 1: PERSONAL PLATFORM

Think of your Personal Platform as your showcase. It’s how your audience and prospective clients can listen to your voice, read your words and experience you in person. It is your platform for sharing your expertise and getting seen and heard.

A coach’s Personal Platform may include a website presence, speaking opportunities, workshops, teleclasses, TV, radio, webcasts, newspapers, magazines, books, e-books, blogging, writing reviews for other blogs, affiliate programs, public relations or publicity through the media.

As you can see, the list of platform opportunities is extensive and always growing thanks to progressive technology such as podcasts. But building a platform doesn’t need to be overwhelming. Remember, your essence and Personal Brand will guide you.

Consider the Personal Platform avenues listed above and others that you can imagine. What opportunities excite you? What have you always wanted to do? What’s in your nature? What feels right, right now?

Pick two or three activities from the list to get started. Write a clear intention or goal for each activity, stretching a bit beyond your comfort zone and setting an accountability with your coach or trusted friend. Conduct research and get the help needed to support you in reaching your aim.

Take Action: Join Toastmasters International to sharpen your speaking skills. Find a Blog (for instance, on TypePad.com) that interests you and post a comment that links back to your website. Post an article on Selfgrowth.com.

STRATEGY 2: BRAND ENGAGEMENT

Now that you have a Personal Brand and platform opportunities to get you seen and heard, your strategy and attention can be turned towards engaging with your audience – your potential clients, your people. Sustainable businesses attract and engage with their audiences consistently and regularly over time.

The Brand Engagement strategy involves a combination of collecting contact information to build a database, traditional offline marketing, online and search engine marketing, staying connected with mixed media such as postcards, emails, e-newsletters and autoresponders, intentional customer service and consistent messaging tone and language.

Don’t know where to start? Your Personal Brand holds a wealth of information about your style of client interaction. Are you brassy and bold? Or warm and soft? Are you the type to send a daily inspirational email, creating a companion-like feel for your audience? Or mail a quarterly newsletter full of practical resources?

There are many choices here and the good news is that there is no one right or wrong way. Be authentic

and continue to connect with your audience in a manner of high integrity and mutual respect.

Take Action: Register for a free trial on Constant Contact or Vertical Response to create an e-newsletter. Hire a Virtual Assistant to set up website keywords, autoresponders and affiliate links.

STRATEGY 3: BRAND EXTENSIONS

Creating and selling products is one of the most effective ways for coaches to establish credibility and get known as experts in their field – plus it adds passive income your bottomline.

Imagine creating a product such as a “10-step guide,” downloadable from the Internet for clients and prospects to purchase at a low cost. Once you’ve created and set up the product for automatic purchase, then your hands-on involvement in that project is virtually complete.

By extending your brand beyond a single offering (i.e. private coaching), you introduce to your audience more opportunities to engage with you and, often times, less expensive and lower-risk price points to sample your services.

Some common brand extensions employed successfully by coaches include: books and other publications created through traditional publishing and self-publishing; compilation books such as “101 Great Ways to Improve Your Life;” e-books; audio and video programs; workshops and seminars; games; card decks; and many more. Many products are easy to create and market online with few costs up-front. If you can dream it, there is a business out there to help you create it.

Don’t think you have a product in you? Think again. Your expertise is your intellectual proper-

ty, the base for any product. Remember: Let your Personal Brand inform your Brand Extension strategy.

Take Action: Dust off an old speech or presentation and list three ways to repurpose and package the content. Brainstorm with colleagues on a joint product; visit CoachingToys.com for inspiration.

STRATEGY 4: BRAND GUARDIAN


Maintaining authenticity in your brand – even when it means changing the colors on your website or discontinuing your popular e-newsletter – is essential to preserving a practice that attracts your perfect clients and gives you the juice to keeping moving forward.

For this reason, the fourth strategy is all about paying attention and being honest with how you feel and what’s happening in your business and your marketplace.

The Brand Guardian is your system to help you regularly check in on all of your business and personal activities and strategies.

Some Brand Guardian activities may include financial fact check-in (i.e. cash-flow, income); solicit client feedback, conduct surveys and observe market response to your branding and marketing efforts; research the offerings and services of coaches with similar expertise; check-in on your dream (Are you on track?), your level of happiness, your feelings; and, check-in on self-care, vacation, health and exercise.

Sounds great, but you don’t have time? Taking time for reflection can be worth three times the amount of your “working hours”. As an entrepreneur you REQUIRE time to step outside of your business in order to readjust your course and keep your business flowing.

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Take Action: Schedule a reflection day every three months to step aside, dream and observe your business. (What's working/not working?) Ask for client feedback about your services and offerings. Start a brand journal (for instance, online at LiveJournal.com).

Honor Your Brand

Give yourself permission to be authentically you and when things get tough, regroup in your purpose and dream. Ask for help. Build a support group. Don't do it alone. Revisit the Four Strategies, stay in action, and, most of all: Believe.

Please visit us at OntbeMarkBranding.com to learn more about getting the help you need to create and leverage your Personal Brand. You don't have to try to do it alone anymore.