

# Basic Brand Building

By JoAnn R. Hines

A brand is the essence of who you are. The more powerful the brand the more memorable you become. Think about brands with which you can identify. What impresses you about them and what attributes make them memorable? Brand icons didn't get that way over night and many of them have failed because they couldn't "connect" with their audience. Strong brands stand the test of time.

After you have thought about strong compelling brands that impressed you, start building your own brand statement by distilling your essential core message:

- Who are you and how do you want people to identify with you?
- What values do you represent?
- When people think about you what image do you want them to visualize?
- Think about what sets you apart from you associates.

This is about building your own image so forget the company or business in your personal brand statement.

Now that you have started thinking about your core message consider ways that you can reinforce your brand. Remember YOU are the brand, not your product or service, so this is essentially about you.

- Where and how can you demonstrate your brand message?
- When and how can you reinforce your brand?

Your brand needs to be authentic, from the heart; you can't make a brand statement believable about something you are not. When evaluating your brand message it's important to understand your audience.

- Who are you trying to impress with you message?
- What do you want them to remember?

You are creating your own "personal buzz" with your brand so the more you can hone in on your audience the better you can craft your message. It's important to recognize that you can't be all things to all people so you want to capture your target audience with your message.

Everything you do should have your brand image, whether it's giving a speech, writing a letter or the message heard on your voice mail. The brand is a living thing, the more you utilize it the more powerful it will become. Building a brand is like using a set of building blocks. One piece doesn't make much of a structure, but 20 pieces do. Think about how you can build your brand by adding pieces to enforce the totality of the structure "you." Getting outside opinions helps your cause. When people think about you what assets do they remember? If it's different than what you are trying to convey then you need to reshape your message.

Take a moment to study the brand messages of people you admire or hope to model. Using the Internet is a great place to do this. Type in the name of the person in

quotation on any search engine and see what turns up. It should give you ideas on ways to craft your own message.

Think about how many places you have your name listed on a piece of paper or the Internet. That's where you should be building your identity. Here is a short list of places you should use to make your brand shine.

- Voice mail
- Business cards
- Stationery
- Email address & SIG file
- Personal website
- Press releases

Personal branding will help you stand apart from your competition. Whatever the circumstances, your brand can only enhance your identification in the marketplace. Keep refining and honing your brand message as you become more comfortable with whom you are.



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