



**BUILDING YOUR
BRAND: IT'S ALL
ABOUT YOU**

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Building Your Brand: It's all about YOU

“Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are the CEOs of our own company: ME, INC. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called YOU.” *Tom Peters*

Your personal brand is not only who you are, but it's what other people believe and say about you as well – as a result of your actions, attitudes, behaviors and words. So do you know what others are saying? And do you know you already have a brand, whether you've intentionally created it or not?

While you cannot control what others say or think, you certainly can influence and manage it. And in a world suffering from “sameness” and information overload, it has become more critical than ever to be very clear and deliberate about developing and promoting your own personal brand in the professional world. That means having a plan and executing it.

If you're ready to get intentional about your personal brand, just follow these simple steps, and you'll quickly have a powerful personal brand that will attract the right kind of people and opportunities into your life.

Evaluate yourself honestly

How do you see yourself?

What words would you use to describe yourself? How do you feel you are unique as a person and as a professional? What situations are you in when you are totally “in your element” and feel completely fulfilled? What are you known as the go-to person for? What drives you? What words do people use when they introduce you? What differentiates you from others who do the same work – your competition in the job market? What combination of things do you offer that no one else does?

Now how do you think others see you?

Without prompting, ask three people who will be brutally honest with you – ask them the same questions. What words would they use to describe you? What areas do they feel you are particularly competent in? In what ways do you stand out uniquely from others?

Note any areas of major disconnect between what you think of yourself, and what others think of you – as well as any areas that you may want to work on diminishing in your personal brand, such as “hot tempered.” Remember the “spanx principle” – you want to be genuinely who YOU uniquely are as a person – but in personal branding you want to put your best foot forward. There's no need to let it all hang out, so to speak.

You should also evaluate your current digital presence, and determine if you like what you see.

A great start is simply Googling your name, and see what shows up. If you haven't spent much time thinking about your personal branding, it's likely that you're going to get a mixed bag of people who have the same name as you, and your social media accounts. Depending on how your company website is structured, that should be near the top as well. As you invest more time and intent in your personal brand, you should start to see improvements in your online image.

Dig Deeper

Although we will not explore this topic fully in this short guide, it's always a good idea to ensure you have determined your own personal and professional vision, purpose, values and passions.

Take some time to dig deeply and be crystal clear about what you want to see for the future – what your role is in making it happen – what guiding principles you live by – and the things that you most enjoy doing and energize you. If you have not spent time creating your own “strategic plan” for your business and your life, it's a great time to do so. And don't get overwhelmed or make it more complex than needed – a few sentences or words for each category are generally sufficient – and you can (and should) update it over time.

I like to describe your personal brand as being something you extract – not something you create – because it is already within you. And your vision, purpose, values and passions are within you as well – they just may need to be extracted with some time and thought.

Develop your Personal Brand Statement

What do you want to be known for? Having an answer to this question defines what your target audience can expect from you. This statement not intended to be your personal mission or life purpose. It is a simple yet memorable statement.

There are many different formulas or templates for personal brand statements, but here's an easy template you can use. This one is easy to remember and to speak aloud – which is critical, since you are probably asked “What do you do?” multiple times every week, in a variety of circumstances. You can answer “I'm a Mortgage Loan Officer” – to which the response will normally be – “Huh. That's nice.” <end of conversation> OR you can have something much more interesting to say. You'll definitely tweak it and adjust it over time to make it your own – which is exactly what it should be.

- I HELP PEOPLE IN _____ (WHERE)
- WHO WANT _____ (WHY/RESULT)
- BY PROVIDING _____ (HOW)
- ESPECIALLY NOW, WHEN _____ (WHEN)
- AND...I'M KNOWN FOR _____! (UNIQUE)

Let's break it down:

- I HELP PEOPLE IN _____ (WHERE)

First things first – you must know your audience. Who specifically do you serve – where or who are they? You can substitute the word “people” for something much more specific if it suits your purposes – I just find “people” tends to work best for those working in the mortgage industry, since we often serve such a variety of different clients.

- WHO WANT _____ (WHY/RESULT)

What is the end result that your audience wants when they work with you? What goal are they ultimately trying to obtain as a result of doing business with you?

- BY PROVIDING _____ (HOW)

Think about the answers to your self-analysis. What is the distinctive way in which you help your audience achieve their desired end result? How do you help them get what they want?

- ESPECIALLY NOW, WHEN _____ (WHEN)

What about this particular time or era that makes your particular way of helping your clients more important than ever?

- AND...I'M KNOWN FOR _____! (UNIQUE)

Have some fun here – what is it that makes YOU and your way of conducting your business really unique?

- I REALLY CARE ABOUT THIS BECAUSE _____. (STORY)

This is where you have a chance to have a great “PS” and add even more life and color to the conversation. You have a unique story to tell, and it is what makes your personal brand your very own – but others can likely relate to the story you will tell them. Describe why you really care about what you do and how you do it – and you've brought even more of your brand to life.

Promote YOU INC: Build your Brand Plan

No sense having a great brand and not showcasing it to the world – it's like winking at someone in the dark!

There are a variety of ways you can communicate your personal brand, a number of which are outlined below but it's far from a conclusive list.

You need not use all of the channels or ideas, but pick a few different ones that are aligned with your target audience, and that you actually enjoy doing or would like to get better at.

Using a variety of channels ensures that you will capture a variety of different consumers of information, in a very overwhelmed and information overloaded world.

And always follow the “3 Cs of Branding” – clarity, consistency and constancy.

- Be clear about who you are and who you are not – this is what differentiates you.
- Consistently demonstrate your brand promise everywhere, and make sure your channels are aligned with your message and personal brand.
- Be sure to be constant in your efforts and use repetition. The saying “out of sight and out of mind” exists for a reason.

Most importantly – let your personality and voice show. Don't be afraid to show some of your personal life, to be real, maybe even a little silly or funny, a little less than perfectly professional – this will generally help your audience relate to you and your personal brand in a much stronger way.

And with personal branding, the key is standing out – not fitting in. If you want your personal brand to stand out from the pack, you may want to consider being a little unconventional.

- Social Media (keep your settings public)
- Create a Blog
- Record video
- Write an article for an industry or local publication
- Present at conferences
- Join professional organizations
- Use automated email marketing services
- Interview local experts
- Start an online or live community (Facebook, LinkedIn, Meet Ups)
- Give back, get involved in your community – this is a great way to not only feel good about yourself personally, but to build your personal brand and meet great people. And don't be afraid to brag on your channels about it!

Assess, Adapt and Adjust

You will need to assess your personal brand efforts over time – and ask others to assess as well. Take a step back every month or two and review if your efforts are in alignment with your branding. And honestly assess if your efforts need to change to be aligned with your personal brand – or if your personal brand may need to evolve.

Your brand is not in cement – it can and will evolve over time, just like you will. Don't be afraid to evolve and tweak your personal brand – and totally overhaul and reinvent if you deem it necessary. After all, this is the brand called YOU – so you call the shots.

On an annual basis, do a deep dive personal brand audit – and start right back at step one. While your personality likely hasn't changed, have your skill sets and talents? Has your audience changed? Has your unique manner of serving them changed? Has your life changed in a way that is relevant to your personal brand? This is a necessary audit to ensure your personal brand is still on point, adjust as necessary, and create and launch your new brand plan for the year ahead. Much like your own growth and evolution, branding is a fluid process – so leave room for continuous growth and change.

Most importantly, don't make the process more complex than it needs to be. Remember that it is far better to have completed something imperfectly, than to have perfectly done nothing.

You can do this. Take the actions, and bring YOU INC to life!