



## “You Are Your Brand” Walking the Walk

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### A Perfect Baby Shower

She passed us going about 90 mph on Interstate 75 somewhere in north central Florida. We were driving back from our vacation. She was clearly late for an appointment. Her 1980's era Mazda appeared to be on its last leg coughing smoke through the exhaust pipe with rusted fenders, worn tires and dirt. Lots of dirt. She roared on past us. Dis-shoveled hair blew distractingly in her face; a McSomething sandwich in one hand, the other barely on the wheel. When the car pulled away, we read “A Perfect Baby Shower” and accompanying phone number, tattooed in white cursive font on the rear windshield. “A Perfect Baby Shower?” my wife asked. “What could possibly be perfect about it?” We wondered how successful her business was. Did clients know she wasn't all that concerned about personal 'details'. And, most importantly, was there any relationship between the two.

### You Are Your Brand

A friend of mine once advised me to:

- Never eat at a restaurant where the chef is not heavy,
- Never buy something big from a salesperson with an inexpensive watch, and
- Always choose the older surgeon (vs. a recent college grad).

If you're a business professional, you may already know this—you are your brand. This means that you are constantly on stage. Existing and potential customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers and other key stakeholders are evaluating you. Always. How do you present yourself? How do you treat others? What comments and posts line your social media sites and appear in network circles? How do you conduct yourself and act in various settings? Does this reflect your brand, the promise to your customers and how you want to be perceived by them? Furthermore, is it the absolute best it can be? Is it unique and/or distinctive from your competitors'? If not, perhaps some soul searching and re-thinking of your marketing is in order.

Dave Dolek in “*Building a Strong Brand: Brands and Branding Basics*” revisits the fundamental terms of brands and branding:

- On **definition of a brand**: an identifiable entity that makes specific promises of value. In its simplest form, a brand is nothing more and nothing less than the promises of value you or your product make. These promises can be implied or explicitly stated, but none-the-less, value of some type is promised.
- On **brand image**: consumers' perceptions *as reflected by the associations they hold in their minds* when they think of your brand.
- On **Brand awareness**: when people recognize your brand as yours. This does **not** necessarily mean they prefer your brand (*brand preference*), attach a high value to, or associate any superior attributes to your brand, it just means they recognize your brand and can identify it under different conditions. Brand awareness consists of both **brand recognition**, which is the ability of consumers



- to confirm that they have previously been exposed to your brand, and **brand recall**, which reflects the ability of consumers to name your brand when given the product category, category need, or some other similar cue.
- On **Top-of-mind awareness**: occurs when you ask a person to name brands within a product category and your brand pops up first on the list.

### **Are You...? Really?**

So are you your brand? Can you be your brand better? Or is it time to re-tool your marketing message? I recently asked myself these questions when redesigning my business cards. Sure, I could have gone the traditional business card route—name; bottom right. Logo; top left. Contact info and some cheesy tagline or image geometrically laid out. Landscape, of course. But, surely, it'd get lost in a sea of business cards on a client prospect's desk—most likely shoved to the bottom or middle of a stack. "We're an integrated creative full-service marketing agency, damnit!" I exclaimed to myself. Clients will seek the absolute best creativity and differentiation in the marketing agency they eventually award the business to. They will demand and expect nothing short of extraordinary. In other words, they want the fat chef in a marketing agency. And, if I cannot market myself as anything but the fat chef, how on earth will I be able to do this for my client's brand? 'Nuf said.

Here are a few suggestions to help you better determine and implement 'you' as your brand:

1. Write down your unique selling proposition and the benefits of your product or service in order of priority. If customer service makes the list, do clients have easy access to you? How about high quality? Are you meticulous about detail? What's the one thing that differentiates you from your competition? Is it clearly obvious from talking with you for a few moments?
2. What business are you in and do you clearly represent that? Take a close look into the mirror. For example, if you're a home cleaning service, are you well organized and present yourself impeccably? If you're a contractor, do you have unfinished personal or professional projects looming? Consider the obvious and be sure to have all bases covered.
3. Revisit your messaging. I've seen real estate professionals tout use of the latest technology and marketing tactics to sell a listing yet do not engage in social media often, use mobile marketing or even have sophisticated computers or systems to take advantage of such technology. Don't say you're something you're not.
4. Are you recognized as a thought leader and/or a subject matter expert? Your peers, customers and other stakeholders respect an expert, a thought leader, a passionate authority; someone who knows just-about-everything-there-is-to-know about their product, service and industry. Consider teaching a class, starting a blog, posting expert tips on your social media site or some other way to create and distribute subject matter expert content.
5. Be the best. Be extraordinary. Don't settle for mediocre. A creative marketing agency needs to have exceptional, recognizable business cards. A perfect baby



shower needs to be perfect; from the person that puts it on right on through to the last rattle. Being the best and most extraordinary will win business.

Ask peers for constructive criticism and evaluation. Have them rate you on various criteria. Would they buy from you? Why? Keep at it. *Your competition is probably doing this exercise right now.*

***About the Author***

Angelo Biasi is General Manager of SMART Marketing Solutions, LLC, a leading full-service integrated marketing company in Naples, FL since 2001. He has helped create and execute marketing plans and integrated marketing solutions for companies such as Playtex, Bic, Rogaine, Tauck, and over 35 colleges and universities, to name a few. Angelo has an MBA in Marketing from the University of Connecticut and teaches Marketing at New York University where he has for over five years. For more information or to learn more, email him at [abiasi@smartmarketingllc.com](mailto:abiasi@smartmarketingllc.com), visit [www.smartmarketingllc.com](http://www.smartmarketingllc.com) or call 239.963.9396.