

How to Create Low-Cost, Walking-Talking Advertisements for Your Brand -- Even if You’re a Solo-preneur

Time and again, I hear the same branding myth from business owners: “I don’t have the staff I need to focus on marketing.” The truth is: Your marketing team is actually very large, even if you’re a solo-preneur. How is that possible?

Marketers for your business include *anybody who can spread the word about your brand*. Leveraged correctly and given the right tools, every single person you know (and every single person that *they* know) has the potential to become a cheerleader for your brand.

I coined this phrase some time ago: “Every time you shake a hand, you market your brand.” Think about it: The number of people you meet every day, every week, every month, and every year is sizeable. That’s a lot of hand shaking and a lot of brand making. So, you don’t have to have a marketing department or even a lot of employees to have a team of people who can effectively – and inexpensively – spread the word about your brand.

Growing Your Team

Still not convinced? I’m going to prove to you right now that your marketing team is larger than you think. Sit down for a minute, grab a pen & paper or your iPad, and brainstorm all of the “categories” of people you know. Here’s just a small sampling of possibilities:

- Vendors/suppliers
- Existing customers
- Association members
- Other entrepreneurs
- University classmates
- Your current staff
- Friends
- Family

This list only scratches the surface. Don’t forget bankers, consultants, advertisers, landlords, reporters, charities, churches, community organizations, your children’s school personnel ... the list can go on and on. In fact, one of my clients came up with 37 different categories of people who could actually be a part of his “team!”

Once you have your list, start to “fill in the blanks” by fleshing out the categories with the names of people who fit into each one. That list becomes your new “marketing team” and, once you sit and contemplate all of the connections *those* people have, you’ll realize your marketing team just multiplied again.

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With this list in hand, the next step is to make sure that everyone on that list knows exactly what to say when they mention your brand to someone. Of course, this means you have to be crystal clear about it yourself first and know how to explain your brand “in a nutshell.” (Read my article on low-cost positioning here: http://www.brendabence.com/media-room/articles/Low-Cost-Positioning_How-to-Make-Your-Brand-Irresistible.pdf.)

Think of it this way: What would you want the people on your ‘marketing team’ to say when there’s an opportunity to talk about your brand?

This is where a great “elevator speech” comes in. It’s what you would say if you needed to give a 20-second compelling-yet-impromptu introduction to your brand. If you had to express your brand’s essence *right now*, in 20 seconds or less, how well could you do it? I’ve found this to be an area where many business owners fall short – and that means potential lost opportunities. Here are just a few tips to keep in mind for your “brand introduction elevator speech.”

- Describe what you do in a compelling way. “I’m an accountant” doesn’t do much for your brand, so make sure you differentiate your brand from the competition.
- Mention who your products/services are for – your specific target market.
- Describe the value, benefit, and quality you bring to your customers in quantifiable terms, such as, “My company helped X number of clients grow their businesses by XX% during a 12-month period.”

The more specific you can be, the better, and keep in mind what’s in it for your customers/clients. In other words, if you were a potential customer, what would you want to know about your brand?

Bottom line: Everyone you know is a potential cheerleader who can become a walking, talking advertisement for your brand. So grow your business by growing your team – it’s a fantastic way to build a brand without spending a dime.

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With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda’s career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development.

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