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Work As If You Own It

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CEO of Brand YOU

In order to be successful in any business you must be willing and able to promote yourself. This is because you are your own brand. So many people just don't get this basic principle. They assume that if they are good at what they do and have a fantastic product or service then people will just use them.

This may become true eventually, but first you need to find ways to 'touch' your customers and give them a positive experience of your sales, service or product - even if they are not in a position to commit to a purchase at the time. Remember that this is a long-term relationship you are opening up. Your aim is to spark an initial connection with like-minded people and then build an ongoing client relationship over time. In order to be successful at this, you must first think of ways that people who aren't clients yet can get to experience your brand first hand.

I remember being blown away when I first heard about cosmetics queen Estée Lauder's remarkable story. From blending face creams on her kitchen table, she then went on to build an international cosmetics empire with sales topping US\$5 billion.

Understanding the importance of getting your customers to experience what it is you actually do can catapult your business and brand awareness to a whole new level. So take a leaf out of Estée Lauder's book: think global but act local and get out there amongst your market.



Learning from the Estée Lauder experience

Estée Lauder's inspiring story is a perfect example of the ways in which resourceful entrepreneurs can get their target markets to sit up and listen. Taking time to study the woman who went from lone individual to worldwide brand recognition is a good place to start if we want to learn about how to create a successful brand from start to finish.

Lauder's brand philosophy was built on the customer experience. As she herself explained. "If you put the product into the customer's hands, it will speak for itself if it's something of quality."

One of Lauder's early business strategies was simply to give away sample products. She believed that her products (once experienced) would become high demand items. On the other hand it was also out of necessity, since Lauder had no advertising budget she chose to utilise what funds she did have by investing money into giving away free samples instead.

Estée Lauder worked smart as well as hard and really thought about where to put her energy – and how. She regularly visited beauty salons where she gave free demonstrations of her products; she invited high society women out shopping on New York's prestigious Fifth Avenue to try her products; and she courted the rich and famous.

Princess Grace of Monaco who eventually became a friend of Lauder's was heard to say in the early days, "I don't know her very well, but she keeps sending me all these lovely things."

Lauder was always one to 'think global but act local' and could often be found at iconic New York department store Saks on a Saturday, promoting her products and working with the staff to improve their sales techniques. She really understood the power of paying attention to the detail of each customer's experience – not only of the products themselves but also of how well cared for they would feel at every 'touch point'.

Within two years Lauder had managed to secure valuable counter space at Saks through her consistent focus on customer service and pioneering the concept of 'backing herself' through giving away free samples. She understood the power of brand positioning.



Coming up...

In this chapter I'll walk you through the following key elements:

- branding
- target markets
- standing out from the crowd
- creating a perception in the market place
- marketing materials...and more

But first let's explore the subject of branding.

Brand YOU

When I first started out I must admit I had very little idea of what a brand was or how it would affect me as a solo operator. I didn't think I really had the budget at that stage to worry about it too much either. And because I was working within an established franchise I didn't give the subject of branding much thought.

I remember that I had a different business card every six months with new photos, different colouring and brochures, which bore no resemblance to the rest of my stationery; there was no consistency at all as far as that went. Looking back now I would do things very differently. This time around with my new business venture the first thing I invested time and money in was getting my branding right. I will gladly share with you what I have learned and found useful so that you can avoid some of the mistakes I made.

A few branding realisations...

- I am the brand;
- whether I choose to be aware of it or not, people forming a perception of my brand is inevitable;



- I am creating the perception of my business brand in everything I say, everything I produce, everywhere I go and everything I do;
- regardless of the size of my business or which specific industry I am in, it is vital to have appreciation for the scope and impact of branding;
- I am the CEO of my own business and my most important job is to be Head Marketer for my brand – what I refer to as, ‘CEO of brand YOU.

What is a brand?

“A brand is simply a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer.”

—Paul Feldwicks from DDB

There are literally hundreds of varying definitions of what a brand actually is. One of the best definitions I heard is this one from Paul Feldwick of leading advertising agency DDB.

The word ‘brand’ refers to something distinctly different from a product or service. Although it is very real, it is also intangible and exists in the mind of the consumer. A brand is not only built through communications or appealing logos but also through the **total experience** that it offers customers.

When we think of really great, successful brands such as Apple, Virgin or Coca-Cola we notice that they all make us feel something: loyalty, love, or even inspiration. Successful brands prompt us to think, feel or do something. Our relationship with these brands goes way beyond the actual product or service they represent. Successful and effective brands create long-lasting ties and lifetime emotional connections with their customers.

Now I know we may not be Apple or Virgin but even as solo operators there is a lot we can do to build a successful brand. The mistake most people make is to stop at having created a meaningless logo on a business card. Your brand is not about a fancy font or a pretty logo: it is about the emotional experience



you are creating of your brand – whether you mean to or not. It is so important that we use this learning about brand to give us an edge when we compete in the business arena.

If you're wondering where to start with all of this, don't panic - it's an ongoing learning process. I spent a small fortune recently to take my new venture through a full brand development process because this time round I did have some budget set aside for investing in this. But even when engaging an expert, it can still be a very expensive learning curve if you don't understand enough to ask the right questions, so the best thing to do is to educate yourself on some branding basics first.

As I have already mentioned brands are more than just their logos. It is important to engage all of your customers' senses in creating a memorable experience. Use sound, taste, smell, colour and texture, not only in your marketing material but also as a part of your personal image and in your office.

Some ideas include: the smell of coffee brewing in your office; tactile business cards; stylish uniforms and the use of corporate colours. Even as a business of one you can still put these things in place and achieve consistency with your brand's image in everything you do. The key is that whatever you decide to do needs to be carried through into everything else

Tips for kick starting your brand

To start with I suggest that you:

- sit down and brainstorm some ideas
- remember to see yourself as a business not an employee
- recognise that as a business you need a strong brand

Ask and answer yourself these questions:

- Q1. After people have interacted with me what do I want them to: a) think b) feel c) do?
- Q2. What is my brand vision, the reason my brand exists? (for example, to provide the best customer service experience in the world)
- Q3. What is my brand mission? This is how you intend to fulfil your vision (for example, to have a strategy around every customer interaction and ensuring there is a 'wow' factor experience for the client)



you do. You cannot afford to disappoint your customers because if they have a certain expectation of a brand experience but in reality it doesn't match up then they will not return.

Aim to build the most predictable and emotionally engaging experience you possibly can. One way to do this is to have a blue print and set systems in place around every 'touch point' (point of contact) through which your customer experiences your brand, starting with the very first time they interact with you. Blue-printing one element, such as your service delivery for example, will help create a consistent experience for your customers. One such example of this could be that every time a sale is made the client receives a card or gift or their product is couriered to them within an hour.

What we can learn from Kylie Minogue

No one epitomises the concept of being the CEO of her own brand more than Kylie Minogue. She truly embodies her own brand, constantly re-inventing herself and changing with the times.

"Pop Princess", "Disco Diva" and "Sequined Showgirl" are just some of the brand identities that the skinny young kid from Ramsay Street with the fluffy hair has worn and discarded over the years in the limelight.

More than 60 million records later, she is certainly the queen of re-invention.

Even when her global record sales were a bit shaky at the end of the '90s she didn't panic: she just switched labels and went all Disco with her first British number one hit single 'Spinning Around'. But it wasn't just the song that created that smash-success comeback: it was the branding of the track (think about how instrumental that famous video clip with her bottom in the gold hotpants was...it even turned her gold hot pants into a popular exhibit at London's V&A Museum). Kylie's branding has also quite deliberately been designed to confirm her status as a gay icon with a loyal fan base. In sales terms this is her target market.

And the Kylie Brand isn't just confined to music: it extends to lingerie, perfume, clothing lines, bedding, TV shows and commercials. In other words, a LOT of touch points. Kylie remains that rarest of commodities: the one-name brand.



Even a business of one has the opportunity to make a lasting impression, so take the time to really think about what your brand is and what you stand for. Some other questions to ask yourself are:

- What is my product or service?
- What is unique about it?
- Who is my target market?
- What problem do they have?
- What solution do I offer?

Take the time to sit down and actually answer each of these questions.

Your target market

One of the first things you need to be clear on is who your target market is. This is about *who* - not how many. Think of it as 'quality, not quantity'. Read that again and really take it in: this is about *who* - not how many.

As I mentioned earlier, it is pointless just collecting names and ending up with a yellow pages phone directory. You are better off building genuine rapport with fewer people who truly know you and connect with you rather than collecting hundreds of faceless names just for the sake of it. It's important to choose a niche market because when companies try to be all things to all people they are not known for any one thing. It's important that you find your niche and be perceived as the expert of that niche. So carry out thoughtful and thorough market research before deciding on your target area.

If I was starting again in sales, I would have chosen a much easier target market with a weaker opponent. Instead I choose to take on a market where there were several dominant competitors, one of whom had one of the largest market shares in Australia. My suggestion would be to make it easier on yourself than I did



and you will be able to gain market share a lot faster and with relative ease.

I admired my main competitor's strong business ethics. I always remember the first time I met her, she welcomed me and said that there was "room for everyone". I was even teased by other sales people and coaches over the years for being so friendly with my competitors. They thought I should be more cut throat but I strongly believe that you can enjoy healthy, fair and ethical relationships with competitors and still compete against them because there is "room for everyone".

Finding your niche

Some people feel reluctant to choose a target market niche as they worry they may miss out on other opportunities. But as one of my business mentors said to me recently, "to choose is not to exclude". It's not about excluding everyone else but rather it's about you focusing your marketing and attention on a particular niche market as a priority.

You need to be seen as an expert, not a jack-of-all-trades and master of none. If you start off narrow you can broaden your market very easily once you have made inroads. But you must start with a small target market to gain traction quickly.

Some examples of niche markets you could choose from might be:

- a particular suburb (not too large)
- focus on the Generation Y demographic (those aged under 30)
- market to the 45yr old+ market
- focus on corporates or families
- set your sights on working with small business owners
- create a business model appealing to students

I think you should niche wherever you feel naturally most comfortable. I know from personal experience that there were certain suburbs where I would have more fun than in others. In



some areas I could open a home and people wouldn't even want to speak to each other – let alone me. But at others the people were more laid back and friendly so I believe it's ideal to choose a target market that you genuinely enjoy working with.

It's also important that you really know your market and understand how they shop, what they like and what they want from a service provider. Walk in their shoes. Go and visit your competitors' businesses because it's so important to see what is already available. It astounds me how many people have no clue what they're up against and don't even know what their competition is offering. You need to know as much as possible about what they are doing.

Depending on your industry you might even be able to ask your friends or colleagues for help and get them to go and check out your competition. What you want to find out is what the experience they offer feels like: how they handle calls, quotations, meetings, and presentations... Even the way their website information is presented will tell you a lot about the quality of the information they are providing to their customers. This is a great way to work out what is missing or lacking in their service experiences and make sure that you fill in the gaps in yours.

Ask and answer yourself the following questions:

- is this a niche full of people I would enjoy working with?
- do I understand this target niche?
- is there enough business to be won in this niche?
- how many competitors are in this market and how strong are they?

Now you have identified your market you need to figure out how to touch them with your brand. This consists of a few different elements that we will take a look at now:

1. Make Your Mark
2. Stand Out From The Crowd
3. Create a Perception of Success
4. Be Persistent & Consistent
5. Be Seen



1. Make your mark

When I left real estate, I left behind a little bit of Kirsty in the form of one of my signature sales moves - fortnightly letterbox drops:

"We leave behind a bit of ourselves wherever we've been."

—Edmond Haracourt
(French Poet, 1856-1941)

probably not the best parting gift.

When I first started working in this particular target area, I was also living there and realised that no one else was communicating through letterbox drops. So one of the first things I did was to have 50,000 flyers printed up, which continued to be delivered fortnightly for the next few years.

I noticed several basic things that none of the other local businesses were doing. For example, at the time nobody else was:-

- using professional photographers;
- creating photo signboards;
- insisting on good quality graphics;
- making regular letterbox drops to prospect for new clients;
- marketing their 'Listing Kits' and other tools on good quality stationery.

And so it was obvious to me that the best way I could stand out in this new target market fast was to promote myself and my services as professionally as possible. I could see that by using more polished imagery and better quality marketing materials I would give myself a competitive edge. Established competitors often have market share so you need to find a way to stand out from them and make your mark. I devoted time and energy into identifying the point of difference about me that was of value to my target market and over time I steadily won business despite being the new kid on the block.



2. Stand out from the crowd

Look around and see what is not being done by your competitors. Try to identify the next new trend and ride that wave.

The key is to stand out and have a real point of difference that's of genuine value to your market. I pay particular attention nowadays to what I receive in my letterbox and I can't believe how little effort is put into this form of marketing. Roughly 90% of what I receive has little to no impact on me and I think most people wouldn't even read it. If you are going to do any kind of mass mail-out you need to try and stand out. Here's how:

- find out which days there is already mail being delivered to your target market by your competitors;
- choose the best day for your flyers to be dropped – on the day when the least marketing distribution is currently being done;
- know what your competitors are doing, read their promotional material, examine any special offers or competitions they are running and come up with a way that you can have a point of difference;
- make sure that you offer something of value and don't make the common mistake of just preaching to the customer about how great you are;
- remember that all your prospects really want to know is what's in it for them.

Another way to stand out from the crowd is to be talked about. In a good way, I mean. Despite the old saying that, 'any publicity is good publicity', I'm not sure I agree. So what do you do if you want people to talk about you and your brand? I believe it's pretty simple: you need to do something worth talking about... preferably for the right reasons. A few examples might be: sponsoring a charity; hosting a themed client event; supporting a local community project; or on a more individual basis treating your top clients to a special day out, such as V8 car racing or



a ride in a limousine. These sorts of experiences are sure to get people talking for all the right reasons.

Case study: Standing out with the power of strategic alliances

One of the marketing campaigns I ran was a community newsletter. As the Editor, my details used to be on one side and I had the contact details of six local businesses that sponsored it on the back. The whole thing cost me nothing except my time to produce and distribute. Because I was the Editor I got to choose the relevant topics covered in the newsletter and I formed strategic alliances with the local business owners who sponsored me so that each of them had a voucher on the back. We offered things like, 'Buy One Get One Free' of their products and services (one was for the local fish and chip shop, for example).

Now, here's the key: if I had tried to advertise real estate, car sales or mortgage broking services then most likely the number of people who read, enjoyed and benefited from my newsletter would not have been so high. But I wanted my target market to keep the newsletter inside their homes...stuck on their fridges or pinned to their kitchen cork-boards. This way, even if they had no need for my services today, I would be top of mind if they ever did – and for the right reasons instead of the wrong ones.

By offering free vouchers on each newsletter it meant that people kept my information handy and visible at home, at least until the vouchers expired. The local people loved it and would even ring me up for extra copies. The coupons for the local fish and chip shop proved especially popular. So long as you make sure that there is some offer of value on your flyers and that they stand out from the crowd for being useful then you'll do fine.

One of the most successful marketing campaigns I ever ran was a billboard promotion. I had only been in sales about six months at the time and was by no means a huge success. One of my property developer clients was building property smack bang in the middle of my target area. It was on a main road where traffic was at a stand still in the morning trying to enter the freeway en route to the city and so I asked him if I could put



up a “coming soon” sign promoting both his development and myself at the same time.

To my delight he agreed and I ordered the largest sign the company made. It had this huge picture of me covering one whole side of the billboard, so that when I stood next to it the picture was two or three times bigger than me. My developer burst out laughing when it arrived. I think he may have been expecting a slightly smaller sign. By the time the development was built and sold, that sign had stayed up for about nine months and you can bet that from the day it went up I was being talked about.

Many people rang me to congratulate me on my success because in their minds a sign that big had to mean that I was already a big success. I even had one client tell me when I arrived at his home to present that their children had been waiting up to see me before they went to bed – I felt like a minor celebrity. It wasn't just people in my local target market area who talked about me either. My brothers and sisters 40km away were asked, “Is Kirsty Spraggon your sister?” when people recognised their surname. Now for the best bit: this billboard cost me \$350 to create at the time. Do you think it was a worthwhile investment? You bet it was. Ask yourself, what opportunities might be available to you right now? Be brave and be willing to stand out from the crowd...get talked about for all the right reasons and you can't go wrong.

3. Create a perception of success

By faking it till you make it you can create a perception of success in the eyes of your market. In the case of the billboard example not only did the sign make me stand out from the crowd, but it also had the additional benefit of creating the impression that I was already a huge success. Even though at this time I was fairly new to the industry, people simply assumed that I must already

“It is totally possible to create a perception of success while reality runs to catch up.”

—Kirsty Spraggon



be hugely successful, and this in turn helped them to trust my advice and my brand sooner.

You can create a perception of success through your branding. Paying attention to detail (such as quality stationery or business cards of a decent weight) will create the impression that you are successful – while the opposite (flimsy cards and poor quality stationery) can make you seem unprofessional or desperate. Not a good look.

Imagine receiving a luxuriously embossed business card. Doesn't it automatically conjure up a sense of sophistication and royalty? Client testimonials are also a fantastic tool for creating a perception of success as they assist in building credibility. Using one-line grabs of compliments that clients have said about you creates a certain perception in people's minds. If for example they know nothing about you but they read a testimonial saying, "Kirsty is reliable, honest and trustworthy" and that, "through the whole process we were able to rely on Kirsty 100%" then they automatically form a positive opinion about you and your brand.

There are many ways that you can 'fake it till you make it' in the eyes of your target market, even if you are just starting out. Investing in the small details (like business cards) that make the big differences in perception is the way to go. Being a published author, for example, gives instant credibility - so why not try writing an ebook and offering it as a free 'value-add' to your database? This positions you as an expert in your field. It creates the impression that you are successful and knowledgeable in your field and that your business expertise is to be sought out, engaged and valued.

4. Be persistent & consistent

These are key if you don't want to find yourself giving up just when you're about to hit gold. Firstly you must be as persistent as a dog with a bone, especially if you intend to make it big. It



took me nearly nine months to get some serious traction going for my business in one of my biggest target markets, and this is not unusual: many studies show that the incubation period for new clients is typically 9-18 months from the first point of contact through to becoming a client. Don't desist; persist.

For that particular target area, I would deliver leaflet drops fortnightly and I continued to do this regularly for the next four years. The thing is, you can't just 'have a go' for a month or two and then give up when you don't get instant results. I remember the first time I delivered 10,000 flyers I thought to myself, "the phone is going to be ringing off the hook"...but not one person called. I realised then that I might have a very long journey ahead of me and that I had to come up with a long-term strategy.

Remember that when you're starting out your target market probably won't know who you are. You're not going to instantly be top of mind for them after just one leaflet drop and you won't be fixed on their radar until you start to stand out from the crowd and create a consistent and reliable perception around yourself and your brand. The good news is that you can create this through being persistent. Trust me, after receiving fortnightly letterbox drops for a year or so people do start to feel like they know you. It is for this reason I am a big believer in having your photograph on everything as it helps to familiarise people with you. This is especially important when you are just starting out as it really helps build trust. Just make sure that you have the very best photographs taken that you can afford and have open, honest body language, eye contact and posture in the images you choose.

Secondly, you must be consistent with the marketing of your brand. This is the key to raising brand awareness and increasing its levels of recognition. You have adopted a particular position (or niche) in the marketplace and your branding should reflect and reinforce this position. So let me ask you this: aside from being delicious, what does 'Brand YOU' have in common with a favourite home cooked meal, one you look forward to over and over again no matter how many times you enjoy it? I think that



the answer is this: consistency. In other words, you know what to expect and you won't be disappointed.

Walk in your clients shoes

I read a great article recently about Jonathan Sands, brand advisor to some of the world's largest companies. He told the story of how he was working on a project for Wal-Mart and they had wanted to get a better understanding of the children's in-store experience so the Chairman had walked through the entire store on his knees. What they discovered was that the kids couldn't actually see or touch some of the best toys, as they were too high. They soon put that right.

Another example I love is when Virgin Atlantic re-engineered the travel experience for its business class passengers. They stepped into their shoes and found that the most stressful part of the experience for their clients was actually leaving for the airport. They now send a car to pick you up and check you in on the way. How terrific is that? It's so simple that it's genius.

To really understand your customer, walk in your customers' shoes. Ask yourself:

- what is their experience of dealing with you at every part of your sales process?
- what are their needs?
- what would assist them in dealing with you?
- what would make their experience more enjoyable?

Look at each part of the process from the moment they first call or come into your office or meet you on site, to when they are signing the paperwork and committing to a purchase. Actually sit in your reception, physically feel what they feel, see what they see.

The remarkable thing is that in both the examples above the cost to make the changes was not huge for Wal-Mart or Virgin but the increased customer loyalty and referral business that followed was.

When I had the life-size billboard photo taken for example, it was a full body shot. This was quite different at the time because everybody else was only using headshots. Not only was the billboard enormous, but the image itself stood out



as being something very new and different...just like me. I wanted something that represented me as playful, relaxed and professional so that people would feel able to connect with me easily; to help them feel like they already knew me. The image on the billboard was then used on all of my marketing material including my business cards, stationary, website, newsletters and letterbox flyers. I was being consistent in reinforcing my brand in everything I did and everything I distributed, and I carried this sense of 'relaxed, playful professionalism' through every aspect of my customer service, products, marketing and attitude. In other words, I was very careful never to undermine myself and let all that good groundwork go to waste.

Putting business systems in place to automatically support this consistency is a very good idea. In fact anything that enables your business to run effectively 24 hours a day so you don't have to, is a great idea as far as I'm concerned.

Effective business systems help to create an ongoing pipeline of work flowing in to help avoid 'peaks and troughs'. Most small businesses experience times where they have lots of sales and then times where they have none. Generally this is caused by the sales person working very hard to generate leads for a month or two and then stopping while they focus on sales and this pattern then repeats itself. You need to consistently prospect for new leads and have systems in place that will support you in creating this pipeline of work.

Some great examples of effective business systems to support consistency include:

- automated systems on how to handle initial call enquiries from a client
- automated systems in place to remind you about when to send out client gifts;
- automated systems in place for lead generation such as letterbox drops or local radio advertising campaigns;
- automated outsourcing alerts (for example, when a sale goes through, the invoice is automatically generated by



your accountant or your computer when you enter the sale price);

- automated systems for the process of after sale follow up (for example calling 1 day, 1 week and 1 month after the clients purchase).

The beauty of automating your business processes is that it gives you the freedom to relax and do what you do best and not be out there on your own running around like a headless chicken trying to manage everything alone. Automated business systems guarantee consistent results and give structure and strength to your business and your brand.

5. Be seen

Don't hide out in your office waiting for the phone to ring and work to flow in: get out and about and be seen in your target market. Get involved in the local community, meet the residents, have conversations and be friendly.

When I first started out I joined several local community groups until I eventually found the ones that worked for me. When you're starting out or if business is slow there are some days when you literally have nothing else to do except for the activities that you decide to create for yourself. And so getting to know your target market, their likes and dislikes, needs and personalities should really be your full time job.

Even once you're busy it is still important to be seen out and about but you can probably afford to be more selective about which clubs or groups you spend your time involved with. Some suggestions are:

- community action groups
- local social clubs
- business networking organisations
- play-groups
- local gym



- surf life saving club
- volunteer opportunities.

Case study: Getting to know your market

In December each year I sponsored the local play group for their annual Christmas Party. This meant providing 150 lolly bags, all of which I would personally deliver on the day. I would also take a picture of each child as they sat on Santa's lap, print them off (at a cost of just 20 cents each) and then pin them up in the hallway for their parents to collect when they came to pick up their children.

The parents loved it, the kids loved it and I always had a fantastic day of fun and laughter with the children. These things don't cost much in terms of money, just a little time and imagination - and even though they rarely pay off in terms of immediate sales, you can rest assured that they will do in the long run.

This ability to take the long-term view is so important: you must infuse people with the confidence that you intend to be around for the long haul, not just the quick buck. Nobody likes to be used and people can be wary of sales people - especially if they've been burned in the past. But however long it takes to build up loyalty and trust, I believe that it's time well spent. After all, there are always so many new sales people and businesses coming and going from various markets: your prospects need to see with their own eyes and experience in their own time that you are the exception to the rule; that you are going to stick around - especially if your competitors have built loyalty and been around for a while already.

The type of industry you're in will determine what type of group works best for the niche market you are targeting but you may be surprised at just where the best prospects turn up so in the early days when you have the time to be more experimental, try out lots of different clubs and societies.

I have found there are a few useful things to bear in mind on this subject. For example, if you're trying to monopolise a target market, it's absolutely crucial to really get to know the people in it. I would regularly get asked to sponsor local school fetes and events but I learned early on that this didn't pay off. Having a



banner or logo visible at a fete hardly gets noticed. But what does work is attending the event, chatting to everyone, offering to sponsor a stall and working on it for the day to meet the locals.

Have a game plan

Why do you need a marketing plan? Because it's a lot more effective than doing it on an ad-hoc basis. When I first started out, I was asked to sponsor a calendar for a local school. I was excited because this calendar was going to be on the fridge of every home in my target market so surely this time the phone would be ringing off the hook? I had hit on a gem of an idea - what luck. But things didn't quite work out that way, I'm sorry to say... It wasn't until I discovered 'the Layering Principle' that my marketing really started to generate measurable results.

The layering principle

You see, what I didn't know at the time I started out was that in order to be effective you need to layer your marketing. The definition of 'layering' in this context is: 'to overlay several marketing campaigns.' For example, once I understood this I was quick to put the following in place:

1. a billboard that my target market drove by everyday;
2. a newsletter with local business discount vouchers on their fridges at home;
3. my personal presence in their lives at various local events I attended;
4. a fortnightly letterbox drop with my photo on the flyer.

I began touching my target market far more regularly and in several different ways. I was becoming a trusted and familiar brand, 'a household name' if you will. The perception that started to form around my brand in the marketplace was that I was reliable, consistent, familiar, local and dedicated. I learned



the hard way not to put all my marketing eggs in one basket or rely on any one thing (such as the miracle calendar) to deliver results. The other thing I had to learn was to marry my proactive implementation with a little ordinary patience.

Your guide to a basic marketing plan

Your marketing plan should include a yearly budget with a rough guide of the minimum items to include. If possible you should build in some leeway for additional unforeseen opportunities that may well crop up. The basic minimum you should try to budget for include:

- Advertising in papers or magazines
- Flyers / letter box drops
- Annual calendars
- Business cards
- Stationery
- Newsletters
- Client gifts
- Sponsorship
- Networking group membership
- Annual client function
- Telemarketing
- Online marketing
- Professional photos of yourself and your team

It should also include a schedule for when you are doing things fortnightly, monthly, quarterly or annually and **remember to layer and overlap events as much as possible** to increase your positioning and have a greater impact.

People often ask me how much to spend on marketing. I would suggest 10% of your overall business income is a good rule of thumb. I received a lot of sponsorship for things like my newsletter and client functions so this did reduce my costs substantially. When you are starting out this is a great way to boost your ability to market yourself in lots of difference ways. I have also noticed that when business is slow people often make the mistake of cutting their investment in marketing to reduce



running costs but I think this is a very short-term view and will damage your profitability in the long-term.

My advice would be to never stop attending networking groups in the hard times, for example, as these are the foundations that create a pipeline of business and help to build a future for you. You must stick to your marketing plan and prospect consistently in all the ways you have planned – especially when the going gets tough and even if you do get busy with clients.

Giving value

One definition of the word ‘value’ is: ‘the desirability of something, often in terms of its usefulness; something worth the money it cost.’ When something is valuable it means that it is of great importance, use, or service.

When you are developing and executing your marketing strategy you need to be clear about exactly what it is of value that you are offering to your prospects and how best to convey this through your market positioning and branding. Always think about what’s in it for them and how you can highlight this. Put yourself in their shoes and imagine walking yourself through a day in their life: what challenges do they face? What would make their life easier? What problems are you solving for them? Whether you are designing a flyer, a brochure, a newsletter or any other kind of marketing material, really consider why it is worthy of people taking precious time and attention out of their day in order to read it and retain it. In other words, what’s in it for them?

I often hear people complain that their clients won’t pay them the price they are charging. They say things like, “My clients don’t value me”, “My competitors are cheaper so I have to discount my fee if I want the job” or, “People feel my prices are too high but I can’t afford to drop them.” It’s possible that what is really going on here is a negative belief at play but almost more importantly I believe that if these people were to position their brands more



effectively they would not be encountering so many pricing objections.

Think about it: people don't want 'cheap'. If they did we would all be buying discount food like "no name brands" instead of splashing out on delicious meals and eating out. In a nutshell, consumers will always find a way to pay more when they perceive that they are getting value for money. So look at what you can offer and how you can be different and increase the value for money. Your prospects are not going to pay more if you appear to be offering the same product or service as your competitors for the same or a higher price. So you need to find ways to show them your added value.

Two heads are better than one

When you are creating your marketing material or working on a business plan, something I have found to be invaluable over the years is the support of friends and colleagues. Think about how many people you know that are in jobs where they use skills that you don't have. Have you ever asked them if they would be willing to provide you with a different perspective? Maybe you could do a 'trade' and help each other out using your particular fields of expertise? Over the years I have collaborated this way with friends who work in marketing, journalism, advertising, graphic design, and web design. Think creatively and don't rule out contacts in your current business network and even colleagues from past jobs.

When you are starting out you need all the help you can get and I have found that most people are more than willing to share their knowledge and expertise if you are willing to ask. I am grateful for the amazing friends who have been so supportive over the years and also for the way in which my asking for help encouraged some of these relationships to grow and become stronger, both personally and professionally. In terms of my marketing material I would always bounce ideas off as many different friends and



acquaintances as possible or send them through an email with a draft layout attached to ask their opinion.

You may even have friends running small businesses of their own facing similar issues regardless of what industry they are in. Either you or they may already have solutions to growing pains such as setting up a website, ordering business cards or organising a launch event for example, and sharing this information with each other can save both time, money...and the headache. So really get comfortable with asking the question, "How did you go about getting X done?" and you might be really surprised at how quickly you learn a lot of new useful information.

Masterminds rock

Another great thing to do is to start up a mastermind group with other small business owners, where you all meet up for an hour once a week to share contacts and ideas. This is a very cost effective way of joining forces and putting your heads together to leverage

Marketing brief checklist for gathering five trusted opinions:

1. what am I trying to achieve with this particular piece of material?
2. what does my brand stand for and how am I communicating this in the quality / presentation / delivery of this marketing piece?
3. who is my niche / target market made up of and what problems for them can I solve?
4. what value am I offering (what's in it for them?) and how am I making this crystal clear?

off each others areas of expertise. It surprises me how many people don't bother getting even one other opinion on what they are doing. As a business coach I see a lot of ineffective marketing campaigns and find myself wondering how they could have got it so wrong. Marketing is not cheap so it's important to get it right or else you are throwing money away. Maybe these business owners feel uncomfortable asking for help or else they really do believe they have done a fabulous job? I do know that looking back at some of the marketing campaigns I ran in my first six months that I did not



always get it right either. It definitely pays to get some advice. I usually like to get about five opinions on my marketing plan from people I trust. Whenever I do this I make sure that I give them a brief. You can use this skeleton checklist as a guide to do the same:

In my experience, 3-5 opinions are all you need to canvass: any less and you're not getting a broad enough perspective but any more and you will just end up wasting time or getting confused. Once you've got the opinions, step back, assess the feedback and make the final decision. Obviously it's important to ask people with some experience in this field where possible and not your grandma! Most offices have a marketing department so befriend them. When I used to do my monthly newsletter I would get five people in the office to proof read it and even then we would usually miss some small mistake. When you are too close to something you can often miss things.

Tell me how...

In this next section I am going to break it down for you even further and give you some of the easiest step-by-step marketing How To's imaginable. You can do it through: the impression you make; the things you say and how you say them; business profiles; and other marketing methods.

Here are the headings that we are going to break down and look at more closely:

- YOU
- Your Elevator Speech
- Your Profile
- What People Think of You
- Asking for Testimonials & What To Do Once You Get Them
- Meeting The Events Manager In You

So, now it's time for some specifics. Are you ready? Great, let's go.



YOU

It's obviously important that by being 'Brand YOU' you understand how everything that YOU do affects, conveys and represents the perception of your brand in the marketplace.

Your behaviour is a part of 'brand YOU'. We are all promoting ourselves so imagine the damage it would do if you were to appear tired, unkempt or frazzled. When you really think about this, the ramifications are huge: every time you've ever been late or dismissive or untidy or not returned calls or missed a deadline these things have said something about you and your brand.

People do notice these things and they do make judgements based on your appearance and behaviour just as much as your hard copy marketing material. If you look tired they may think you can't handle the job. If you look unkempt they may question the quality of your work. If you don't return calls for days this will affect the impression they are left with.

Conversely, every time you have been courteous, patient, helpful, professional; every time you have been terrific company at a dinner party; every time you have followed up as you said you would; every time you have gone out of your way to make sure a deal went through or your client received the best possible after-care...well, all of these things have been saying things about your brand as well.

Now I want you to take a minute to really reflect on how you look. It would be nice if we lived in a world where our outward appearance didn't reflect on our ability to perform but we don't. I can't tell you how many supposed professionals I met wearing crumpled suits, sweaty palms and with unkempt hair. To top it all off, they often hand over a creased business card that looks like a two year old made it.

Now, you may be too close to this to be able to see it objectively so for a different perspective consider asking colleagues or friends to help you identify what you are currently saying as a brand through your image and then make any necessary changes. Think about what your appearance is saying about you: how does it



represent your brand? Is it in alignment with the target market you have chosen?

Someone once advised me to use this rule of thumb: always dress slightly more professionally and formally than your clients. Also check that your personal hygiene, hairstyle, make-up and so on are appropriate. As a young woman I was always conscious to cover up and not wear anything overtly sexy. Someone recently said to me, “You are so consistent every time I meet you. You’re energetic, motivated and professional.” I thought this was a great example of how I represent my brand consistently. We will talk more about how you portray your own brand in Chapter 5 but now let’s talk about...

Your elevator speech

You may be wondering what I talking about: who on earth gives speeches in elevators? This is the idea that we sometimes meet important people in metaphorical elevators (any situation where we have a captive audience for a brief period of time) and yet very few people are prepared to make the most of this opportunity when it occurs.

The idea of an ‘elevator speech’ is to have a prepared presentation that grabs attention and says as much as possible in as few words as you can. Obviously there is little chance you will actually need to use it in an elevator but it comes in very handy when you are networking, meeting new clients, talking with industry contacts and spreading the word about your business through friends.

A great elevator speech gives clarity around what you do and helps make you memorable. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve asked people, “What is it that so-and-so does again?” because every time they answer me it’s this long rambling story that uses a lot of words but doesn’t communicate anything clearly. Other occasions for using a great elevator speech include when a client asks, “Why should I choose you rather than your competitor?” or



“How does what you do make a difference to me?” Even if your potential clients don’t ask these questions aloud they will still be thinking them so it’s important to cover them.

Your elevator speech is your ‘mini pitch’. You need to be polished and prepared so you can convey what you need to even if you only have a minute or two. As an absolute minimum you should be able to cover these questions in your mini pitch:

1. What value do you offer?
2. What problem do you solve?
3. Why should a client choose you / your business over any another?

When I first moved into the speaking industry I attended an annual conference with hundreds of other speakers and it seemed to be ‘the done thing’ to immediately ask people what their speaking topic was. Everybody else was responding with elevator speeches but I had no clue how to answer because I hadn’t figured out my niche or target market yet. I was very unclear on a positioning statement and quickly realised that if I wasn’t clear then nor would anyone else be.

If you want people to ‘get’ what you do then you need to help them by being very clear yourself and having a short sharp clear elevator speech prepared. The next hurdle came when I tried to write mine: all those old “I’m not good enough” fears resurfaced along with the, “But I haven’t done anything to talk about yet”. The worst mistake I made was to print out twenty of the industry’s top performers’ profiles to get some ideas of what to say: this just made me feel even more of a fraud, reading about all the amazing things they had done. I was just starting out and should have realised I couldn’t possibly compare and that was ok. Once I understood this I was able to cheer myself up and get back into ‘positive Kirsty mode’. I started concentrating on the following positive things:

What are my strengths?

What are their needs?

What problems do my clients have that I can solve?



What are the benefits of them choosing me?

How do I make a genuine difference?

What do I want them to think, feel and do after experiencing my service or product?

Ask yourself these questions because with the answers you can sit down and create a 1-3 minute version, which eventually with a bit more work becomes your elevator pitch. Brainstorm some ideas using the key sentences and practise trying them out loud to hear what they sound like. Try them out when you next meet someone at the shop or a networking function.

The brilliant thing is that nothing has to be set in stone so be brave and have fun playing around with it until you honestly feel that you have nailed it. You'll know when this happens because it will start to feel more natural when you speak the words. Through practising in front of people you can also gauge the response and see whether people really understand what you do and what's in it for them. If they need to ask you a lot more questions to get it, then you're probably not there yet.

If you do have time to expand on what you're saying, a great way to communicate more detail about what you do in a way that is memorable is to use stories to illustrate your point. For example, I would often tell prospects about one of my client's success stories. Storytelling using real life examples is a very powerful tool: you are indirectly advising them of what could happen if they are really careful in making the right choice... you!

Your profile

Just as important as being prepared with your elevator speech is having a fabulous profile. Your profile is basically your 'biography'. A profile may be the first piece of information people see or read about you. It can be used in your presentation



kits, as a pre-meeting email, in hard copy delivered prior to an appointment or made available on your website.

If you can afford it I suggest you get this done by a professional. You can write the rough guide for them and then get it sharpened up, because unless you are a professional writer, you aren't the best person for the job of creating the best biography. I can't believe how many profiles I have seen in various formats with spelling mistakes and poor grammar. What kind of a first impression do you think it creates? Particularly if you claim to have good attention to detail. With this in mind, you should have the following things in your profile:

- a brief sentence stating your experience and credentials;
- then expand on the details of your experience, what you have done, where and when;
- what's in it for them;
- what problem your expertise solves and why choose you;
- what you're passionate about (share something personal like a hobby);
- what you believe in (your business philosophy; your reason for being);
- what your clients can expect from you and your brand;
- how you make a difference.

Try to keep your profile to about 200 words at the most. Any longer and people lose interest. Short, sharp and to the point is best. It's also a good idea to place some 1-line grabs from client testimonials down one side of the page. These words create a positive perception of you in your clients' mind before they even meet you.

Reading other people's profiles is a great way to get ideas – as long as you can do it without getting intimidated, which is not the point of the exercise. Profile envy aside, other people's bios are very useful in helping you understand the benchmark you should be aspiring to. Make sure you are always looking to people at the top of your industry. Think of them as the yard stick for where you would like to be - not right now, but over time - so



that way you feel inspired rather than overwhelmed. This way, if you can't afford to have your profile professionally created at least you can get some good ideas about layout, colour options and font styles. Things to avoid include: using too many bold colours; using poor quality photos; fonts so fancy you can't read them and 'busy' crowded layouts.

Remember that all you need to do well to be different is to be you. We are all unique and amazing and have all done something wonderful to share, so sit down and think about the questions above and find your own story. If you're struggling, find a loved one to blow your trumpet for you. Allow the words they use to boost you up a bit and listen to them telling you how great you are. Let them remind you about all the great things you have done, because sometimes we forget or think that everyone else is special but that what we have done is not important enough to express. This is why a fresh perspective can help.

I always like to include something personal in my profile such as my passion for travel or learning. It makes people feel like they know me a little when they read it. Most importantly I suggest you have fun with all this and be loud and proud about who you are and everything that you have accomplished in your life.

What people think of you

Why is it so important to gain feedback on what people think about you, your brand and your business? For two main reasons:

1. you get a good idea about what is and isn't working in your business and the opportunity to make changes to improve your customers' experience;
2. when you are receiving fabulous feedback you can use this in your marketing materials for your own self-promotion; it helps you gain credibility because what someone else says about you is generally considered to have more impact than what you say about yourself.



Feedback forms and testimonials allow you to check up on what people think of you and your brand and also whether you are being consistent in how you are showing up for them. I would often read through my testimonials and find a consistency to the words people would use to describe me in business. Words and phrases that would come up time and time again were things like:

- “Kirsty was up front with us from start to finish”;
- “Kirsty is dedicated, helpful, enthusiastic and committed”;
- “Kirsty gave honest feedback and open communication from day one”;
- “Kirsty believes in constant communication, has a ‘can-do’ attitude and she provides a personalised service”;
- “Kirsty really went above and beyond the call of duty in servicing us and meeting our needs.”

The point of sharing this with you is that nothing here is difficult to do: these things are easy and they are free, yet for some reason qualities such as integrity, honesty, straight-talking and remarkable customer service are not well-renowned in sales roles. This is why what’s most important is how your clients feel after they have dealt with you and paid their money. So canvass feedback and pay attention to it: if the words coming up again and again are not in line with your branding, ask yourself why and make the changes you need to.

One more thing I’d say here is that it is just as important to look at what your clients are not saying about you. I have noticed some people use testimonials that say things like, “Sarah was good” or “Tim helped us out a lot”, thinking that’s what counts as a great recommendation but just because you receive a testimonial doesn’t necessarily mean it’s good enough to use. What these statements are not saying also strongly tells a story. You may have been “good” but remember that what you really want to be is outstanding in order to build a repeat and referral business.



Asking for testimonials & what to do once you get them

In my experience even if people are very happy with their experience of your service, they can get caught up with other priorities and end up forgetting to get back to you with a testimonial.

I have found that feedback forms can be very effective, particularly if you want to get a large amount of feedback to gain an idea of how you are performing in each area of your business. Just after the sale process send out an email while you are still fresh in people's minds. By making their reply an entry into a free competition you will receive a higher amount of responses. Keep the forms as simple as possible to complete. They shouldn't need to write a novel. A quick yes or no questionnaire is sufficient together with a list where they can rate your service and other areas of your business out of 10. This is a fantastic way to gain feedback from 90% of your clients.

Testimonials are also important as they generally say a lot more about you and you can use them in your marketing. They can be a little bit harder to get as most people are 'time poor' and may feel it's just not a priority for them once the deal is complete. As long as you can get a 50-80% response then that's all you need. Don't get too hung up on getting a testimonial from every single client. It's not the quantity but the quality that's really important here. Just focus on trying to get the majority to answer positively.

I keep all this very simple for the client and prefer to use email as a method of gathering this information since it's not imperative for it to be on company letterhead. If you do get some of these, just save them for the odd occasion where you think it's necessary to show off a bit and need a really terrific, formal looking testimonial.

There is a sample letter called "Testimonial Request" in the free resource section of my website which I invite you to make use of. Go to: www.kirstyspraggon.com.au



Once you have gathered some testimonials the question is, “How can you use them?” I have seen some fabulous ideas around this over the years. For example, you can:

- put a one-line grab from a brilliant testimonial into part of your email signature running along the bottom;
- use them in your presentation kit to impress potential clients;
- use them to address and overcome common concerns or objections by showing how well you have handled similar situations in the past;
- use them on marketing brochures, business cards or your website landing page.

To use testimonials effectively and get the best out of them, you should always use the comments that clearly state you achieved what is promised in the “What’s In It For Them?” section of your presentation, pitch or approach. Always think about consistency of message and you won’t go far wrong.

Meeting the events manager in you

I mentioned earlier how the annual client events I held offered a fantastic opportunity to stay in touch with my clients. In addition it also offered me a chance to:

- a) thank my clients
- b) give people a 3D ‘experience’ of my brand
- c) market myself for new business

Now, I warn you that event management is no small task. It will take a lot of effort but done properly it is worth the time and effort 100 times over. If you wait until you are 1-2 years into your business you might even be able to afford to outsource some of the tasks involved. Remember author and marketing expert Seth Godin’s comment about “dating” your clients and becoming



their friend? Well this type of social event is the perfect way to do just that.

First consider that if you're not going to do it right then it's best not to do it at all. You can do more damage through hosting a bad event than by doing nothing. I remember being invited to attend a very unimpressive corporate event. On arrival I was left to stand around waiting on my own as I didn't know anybody there. I felt a little uncomfortable, and I was not introduced to anyone by the hosts. Once inside it was announced that the keynote speaker was running late and when he finally did arrive he wasn't very good. The staff member at my table representing the company sat with his back to the speaker and started nodding off during the talk. What a terrible impression to create about your branding and company values. My experience of them was that they were an incompetent and unprofessional company. The way they handled their event made me worry that if this was how they handled an event then how did they handle their business? And so I never went back and I never referred any clients to them either.

By comparison, that same week I attended another event held by the Hegney Property Group in Western Australia where 20 staff members were waiting to greet every guest on arrival. They made a real effort to introduce people to one another and everything ran on schedule. The event was fun and professional with excellent attention to detail (things like nametags spelt correctly and decorations all in theme). I left thinking that I couldn't wait to do business with these people. Their event was a terrific reflection on how professional they were in business and the high standards they set for themselves.

Secondly, if you do hold an event, make sure it is all about your guests and not about you. Say thank you to your clients and avoid trying to sell or pitch to them in this space. New business will be a positive side effect if you run a great event – but it should not be the main focus while it's actually happening.

When hosting an event you can choose to go it alone like I did or join together with a couple of colleagues or put on an event as



a whole office. My client events generally cost me between \$500 and \$5000 but getting even one sale out of the event covered this investment. Since I generally had about 150 people attending and having a great time there was more than a good chance of that happening. It was definitely the best marketing campaign I ran every year. Another option for reducing costs is getting the event sponsored by a local business or brand that ties in with what you do. Let them put up some of their banners or add their marketing material to your gift bags in return for covering all or some of the expenses.

So if you are going to do this at all, then commit to doing it right. And if you are going to do it right, here are some things to consider.

Six golden rules of successful event management:

1. Choosing a Suitable Time & Place
2. Invitations
3. Following up (RSVPs)
4. Sponsorship
5. At the Event
6. Post-Event Etiquette

1. Choosing a suitable time & place

I have held many different types of events: I have tried bowling, breakfast quizzes, wine tastings, movie nights and BBQs. The type of event you hold should reflect you, your clients and the tone of your relationship with one another. My events were always based around fabulously well-organised fun as this reflected my brand and who I was to my clients. My guests were generally aged 35-45yrs and a mixture of singles, couples and parents with young families. Over the years I learned what worked best for them, which days of the week they found most convenient and the times of the year easiest for them to come along and let loose.

For example, even though I myself didn't have any children I made sure I considered things like school holidays, bed times



and weekend sports clubs so that all my clients who were parents were still able to attend. You might even decide to conduct an informal survey to see what might work best for your clients. For example, you could send a simple email round, asking: “If I were to host an event to thank you for your valued business would a weekday, week evening or weekend make it easier for you to come and have some fun?”

Also think about whether you want to include children or make it an adults-only event. Whatever you do it’s best to try and avoid events with too much focus on alcohol, as this is usually the most expensive component. Having said that, I did host a great wine tasting event which was fun because people were able to attend without children and let their hair down and I reduced the costs by inviting a few wineries to use it as a showcase for their wines – which meant free sampling.

2. Invitations

In answer to the question, “Who to invite?” I would say, “Everyone.” This is not the time to try and cut corners to minimise the costs. This is the time to ‘do it, and do it right’. Once you are hosting an event it really doesn’t cost much more to invite every client as it does to invite a few. I would invite everyone, including: clients who were currently dealing with me; past clients; networking contacts; colleagues; personal mentors, family and friends who had shared in my success and helped me get to where I was.

Even the invitations themselves are a great way to create an experience for your guests. One year I had the theme ‘You’re a star’ and so I had this printed on the invitations and filled all the envelopes with coloured stars.

It’s also a good idea to invite Journalists from your local newspaper as well as local council members. You never know, the free coverage you get as a result might be just the thing you need to position your brand as a local market leader once and for all.



3. Following up (RSVPs)

People get busy and even when they mean to RSVP sometimes it slips their mind. For an event to work you need to put aside time to follow people up. I also suggest inviting double the number of people you would like to see attend as it's normal to experience a 50% 'hit rate' for attendance. Don't worry about this, just prepare for it by compensating before you even start.

I also suggest sending out your invitations by post as this is more personal than email and also give people about six weeks' notice. After this I always followed up over the subsequent two-week period with a personal phone call to check that everyone received the invitation and let them know how much I would love to see them there. This call was the one thing I would never have considered outsourcing.

After the follow up calls I would compile a list of RSVPs and one week before the event I would email everybody once more to get them excited about what a great night it was going to be and share how much I was looking forward to catching up with them. Finally, I sent out one sms to their mobile phone one day prior to the event with a reminder of the address and time with a quick, "looking forward to seeing you," signoff at the end.

4. Sponsorship

Whenever I was organising a client event I would write to 3-5 companies with whom I had a strategic alliance and offer them the opportunity to sponsor part of it. I would generally ask for a \$500 contribution and in exchange they would get to attend the event with five guests, put a banner on display and have their logo running as part of the slideshow. I also enrolled local businesses into donating prizes such as free massages, gift vouchers and complimentary dining for two and we would have a raffle raising money for a local charity. I recommend this as a great way to have fun, bring people together and create a platform for yourself to interact with the room as a whole. For example by being the person to draw the raffle on stage and present the prizes.



You can find a copy of the 'sponsorship request letter' on my website in the free resource section under articles. Go to: www.kirstyspraggon.com.au

5. At the event

Some of the things to consider here include:

- how are your guests going to interact?
- do most people know each other?
- if not, what can you do to make them feel more comfortable?
- will anybody be coming alone and how can you make sure they feel part of the crowd?

One thing I always remembered to do was invite my family and friends to these events, as they were a big part of my success. In return for coming along and having fun they would help me out in making sure everyone was introduced to at least one or two other people. If it was a seated event I would also make sure that guests with a similar interest or sense of humour sat on the same table together with one of my own relations or friends to help the mingling magic happen.

It's really crucial that on the day itself you have nothing to do other than mingle and encourage people to relax and have fun. The most you should be doing is drawing the raffle we were talking about earlier. Just like a couple on their wedding day, you might easily find the whole event flies by without you having spoken to anyone if you're too busy still organising things instead of being in the moment. So take care not to be left wondering why on earth you wasted a golden opportunity to catch up with your clients by running around panicking instead of mingling with your guests and talking to them before it was too late and they went home.

In short, it really helps to have volunteers there on the day to assist you and to have organised as much as humanly possible in



advance so that there is hardly anything left to do but relax and enjoy letting the whole event unfold smoothly.

6. Post-event etiquette

To make sure you get the most out of every event I suggest you take as many photos as possible. I always had an assistant who took a picture of me with each family or couple. That way after the event I would have good reason to post them out a newsletter with their own individual photo and a magnet on the back.

Not only did this make people feel really special and cement our relationship but it kept them talking about the event for weeks and sometimes months afterwards. I've heard stories of friends visiting my clients' homes, asking about the magnetic photos on the fridge and ending up hearing all about what a great night we all had. And do you think that things like this resulted in extra business for me? You bet it did.

The main thing I want to encourage is to remember to think outside the box. Really take time to sit down and think about how you can make your event memorable. Consider what elevates an ordinary event into an incredible experience and then work hard to deliver that as much as possible. By taking this approach I had bigger and bigger events every year (generating more and more business) and a lot of clients who attended every single year since the first event. I don't know about you, but I think that's a great way to have fun and build business!



BFO - Blinding Flash of the Obvious CEO of Brand YOU

1. Promote yourself to succeed

In order to be successful in any business you must be willing and able to promote yourself. This is because you are your own brand. You will need to find ways to 'touch' your customers and give them an experience of your brand.

2. YOU are your brand

A brand is not only built through communications or appealing logos but also through the total experience that it offers customers. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Q1. After people have interacted with me what do I want them to: a) think b) feel c) do?
- Q2. What is my brand vision, the reason my brand exists? (for example, to provide the best customer service experience in the world)
- Q3. What is my brand mission? This is how you intend to fulfil your vision (for example, to have a strategy around every customer interaction and ensuring there is a 'wow' factor experience for the client)

3. Getting your brand known

"If you want people to talk about you it's pretty simple - you need to do something worth talking about".

- Get Noticed
- Stand Out From The Crowd
- Create a Perception of Success
- Be Persistent & Consistent
- Be Seen
- Have a Game Plan

"A brand is simply a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer."

—Paul Feldwicks from DDB



Register for your Online Coaching

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the number of business ideas and resources out there, so in order to save you from wasting time and energy on the wrong ones I have set up a free online coaching system to support you in your journey.

Used in conjunction with this book, you can register for this free online coaching system and receive a monthly email with reminders of core concepts, BFOs and downloadable worksheets. These will help you to stay on track and assist you in becoming a master implementer.

**Get started right now
Visit www.onlinecoaching.kirstyspraggon.com.au
and register your details.**



What people are saying about *Work As If You Own It...*

“Work As If You Own It is filled with Kirsty Spraggon’s expert success strategies that will take your business to the next level. Whether you’re just starting out in sales or you’ve been in business for years, this book is an essential read for anyone wishing to attain a higher degree of success.”

—Ivan Misner

New York Times Bestselling Author and
Founder of Business Networking International

“If ever there was a time that the sale training industry needed a fresh face with a ‘can do’ attitude it is now. There is whole generation of salespeople struggling in today’s market because they have never experienced conditions like the current ones. There are very few speakers who can inspire these people to go to another level when they are surrounded by so much negativity. Kirsty Spraggon brings a fresh new approach that will help sales people go to a new level even in the most difficult environment. Today’s market is loaded with opportunities so read this book and set your self up to take advantage of them”

—Michael Davoren

Director 2bid2

“Right now, more than ever is the time you must focus on increasing your sales. Whether you are a business owner or a sales person, Kirsty’s book is the ultimate business tool that will help to increase your sales exponentially. If you aspire to be outstanding in sales, read this book.”

—Toney Fitzgerald

Best Selling Author, Speaker and Lifestyles Coach



“Kirsty Spraggon walks the talk. She understands the nuts and bolts of success in the market place because she has lived it. This book is essential reading. Apply the principles in it and your life will prosper.”

—Pat Mesiti
International Motivational Speaker & Author

“Having been personally involved with some of the world’s best Authors and Educators, such as President of Brian Tracy International, Anthony Robbins, Tom Hopkins and Zig Ziglar, I highly recommend that you read Kirsty’s book. It is a definite for anyone wanting to learn from the wisdom of someone whom has walked the path themselves. You will shorten your learning curve and save yourself thousands of hours by reading and then applying Kirsty’s wisdom and knowledge.”

—Ronnie Kagan
International Speaker & Best Selling Author



To Read More From This Book

I hope you have enjoyed this chapter. To read further chapters or order your copy of *Work As If You Own It* go to the resource section of my website at: www.kirstyspraggon.com.au/resources



Planning a Conference or Training Session?



Kirsty is an incredibly driven individual with high energy. As a professional speaker, she adds a refreshing approach to any event.

Kirsty is passionate about supporting high performance sales people through the transition from salary to commission and performance based incentives. Her deep insight into the profession enables her to connect with her audience and encourage them to take action.

Audiences love Kirsty's contagious energy and say "you can't help but get caught up in her wonderful enthusiasm and positive outlook on life".

Expect high doses of fun, interaction and engagement. Kirsty's sessions are energetic, dynamic and inspiring. She is easy to work with on and off the platform and will be a fabulous contribution to your next event.

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At some point in our lives most of us have thought about:

being our **OWN BOSS**
working our **OWN HOURS**
making our **OWN CHOICES**

... But few have the courage to make it happen. If you have dared to take the path less travelled and have embraced your entrepreneurial spirit then this is the book for you.

Whether you enter the world of commission sales through real estate, the automotive industry, network marketing, mortgage broking, financial planning, insurance or recruitment (just to name a few) you should be working as if you own the business.

In this practical 'how to' book you will be guided every step of the way from start up to success.

Discover how to:

- ✓ master the transition from employee to entrepreneur
- ✓ identify the beliefs and mindset barriers that may hold you back
- ✓ set up and run like a business with a clear plan & strategy
- ✓ position yourself as an expert and create a perception around your brand
- ✓ master the art of delegation, outsourcing and making the most of your time
- ✓ thrive instead of just survive by planning for the long haul
- ✓ achieve all this while still maintaining balance ... and your sanity



Kirsty Spraggon is a speaker, author and coach who has been there and done it herself. She has been selling for over 15 years in a variety of industries, always at the top of her field. Kirsty ranked in the top 1% of individuals in RE/MAX's global network of 121,000 real estate agents while still managing to enjoy 3 months off every year. She is living proof that you can be hugely successful while still having fun and creating the life you want.

“Whether you’re just starting out in sales or you’ve been in business for years, *Work As If You Own It* is an essential read if your goal is to attain a higher degree of success”

Ivan Misner, New York Times Bestselling Author and Founder of Business Networking International