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BRAND PERSONALITY: SUCCESS STORIES

Success is measured differently for each of us. It's a personal and emotional reward when a client is satisfied. We revel in the gratification of achieving personal excellence, an increase in confidence or making more money.

Realizing your personal brand helps you experience all of these successes.

In our two previous articles on brand personality, we discussed the importance of finding your brand within you. We demonstrated ways to market your brand through websites, social media, digital and cutting-edge strategies. In this third article, we will discuss the tools, decisions and strategies necessary to complete your business transformation.

Let's look at three results generated by this brand identification process. We'll look more closely at the tools we used in the process later in the article. Please be aware these are brief summaries of four months of work each, and do not nearly reflect the breadth of the effort. For more, tune into our webinar with these designers on March 4 at 3:00 ET. Go to furniturelightingdecor.com for details.

JAIME BLOMQUIST JAIMEBLOMQUIST.COM



Jaime is an accomplished designer who, after 16 years of design, decided to kick her business into a higher gear. We learned that her clients viewed her as motivated and energetic, and fun with a sense of humor. The benefits they derived from Jaime are seen in a few brief comments: "I was heard — I'm at peace — feel a sense of worth — accomplished — she fought for us — well worth the money."

Jaime learned that she was better and even more valuable than she thought. Her process of design, with a deep understanding of architecture as well as design, proved important and differentiating. Her brand personality now shines through clearly on her website generating new business on multiple occasions. She thinks of herself as an advocate for her clients. Talk about a great marketing foundation!

Jaime was able to take this feedback and create a new marketing campaign which was titled, "At Peace. At Home." Her outreach to

local media generated multiple stories in local newspapers and design magazines. She initiated a social media effort using Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. She added print advertising. Importantly, Jaime's business, already a success, doubled in a two-year period. She kicked her business into a higher gear.

SHERRY LEE RISEANDESIGNHOME.COM



Sherry Lee is a case of undiscovered talent. Her clients and associates position her as family-driven, focused, warm, sophisticated, teamwork, a servant and strong. Her clients' feelings regarding Sherry's work are: "Speaks to who I am — buttoned up — excited about living here — tranquil — she's a concierge designer."

Sherry has taken this validation of her work and jump-started outreach by networking with local business groups, which have supplied her with numerous leads. Because of her specialty in lighting, Sherry was published in a statewide

design magazine as lighting authority and design which generated new projects. Sherry was also featured in a four-page story citing the new, up-and-coming stars in design.

Sherry learned to think like a brand and has created goody bags, leave-behinds and thank you gifts branded and personalized. She is confident in who she is and sees herself as an authority with real value, all in 18 months.

After 16 years in business, Sherry decided two years ago to re-direct and rebrand her business. She now has direction and vision. Hourly rates for top-level designers in her market area are \$150-\$250 per hour, and Sherry is now at the top of that rate structure, 150 percent higher than when she started.

"SHERRY LEARNED TO THINK LIKE A BRAND AND HAS CREATED GOODY BAGS, LEAVE-BEHINDS AND THANK YOU GIFTS, ALL BRANDED AND PERSONALIZED."

- Mike Peterson

LYNNE & LIZA CLARK CLARKANDCLARKINTERIORS.COM



Lynne and Liza Clark are a wonderfully unique and creative mother/daughter design firm. Lynne started the firm 33 years ago and has built a successful business with multiple repeat clients. Clients define Lynne and Liza as imaginative, multi-dimensional, adaptable and analytical. The rewards clients experienced are rich: "A place to create memories — my forever home — authentically me — my place where everything is settled — escape

“LYNNE AND LIZA FEEL THE CLIENT FEEDBACK VALIDATES THEIR WORK AND HAS HELPED THEM IDENTIFY THEIR BRAND. “DESIGNING FOR YOUR LIFE’S JOURNEY” IS A GREAT MARKETING POSITION FOR THE BRAND.

- Mike Peterson

in my own home.”

Their clients talk about the flow and connectedness of the design throughout the home. Lynne and Liza anticipate needs of the future, and design today with an eye to the home and family needs in the years to come. As a brand position, this is unique and marketable.

Lynne and Liza feel the client feedback validates their work and has helped them identify their brand relative to the competition. They now step out into the market as brand personalities and know that “Designing for Your Life’s Journey” is a great marketing position for their brand.

As of this writing, Clark and Clark are finishing their new website which will include the distinguishing brand characteristics of health-based design and nature-based design. Their ability to provide natural images and connection to nature is a unique attribute which differentiates them. Rates have increased and they are poised to begin marketing the newly defined Clark and Clark Interiors brand personality. **FLD**



By Mike Peterson, founder of Visionary Design Marketing. To learn more, go to: visionarydm.com

Marketing Strategies & Tools

Inherent in each of these examples are strategies and tools that will benefit all designers. Here is a brief look at the tools that will move all design businesses forward.

CLIENT RESEARCH

Listening to the marketplace is fundamental to growing your business. How many of you have done research, even just a quick review, of the people you have served? Why not? Think like a major marketer for a minute. Do we really think P&G, Apple or Kohler would launch new products without first talking to the marketplace? No! Retailers today regularly follow up transactions with, “How did it go?” surveys. Successful, major brands use the client base — the market — to listen and learn, and the same reasoning is important in interior design.

For each of our case studies, 10 to 15 clients were interviewed. Clients were asked subjective and relationship questions relating to the designer. The answers were rich with marketing potential, and assurances for the designer. One question — “How do you feel as a result of working with (designer) — ”I’m at peace”, “I have a sense of self worth” were two of the answers. Imagine how uplifting it is to hear from the people you serve when you have changed their lives. Imagine how rich those words are when you add them to your website. Client research is where professional brand analysis begins.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

In each case we studied other designers in the same space and region. Who focuses on contemporary or traditional? Who was a boutique vs. a 50-person design firm? What is the average of the rate structures in the market? Learning where your competition is as a brand helps you see your path forward and position yourself as differentiated. We analyze multiple variables to help distinguish you in the marketplace and fuel the many marketing efforts you employ.

PHOTOGRAPHY

In virtually every instance designers needed to upgrade their photography. A challenge many designers face is whether to spend the extra dollars on top-rated photographers. Think about how many pictures you have on your website and how long they will be there. The cumulative image of a site is heavily influenced by how your work is captured in photography. The increase in cost, amortized over multiple years, is

minor compared to the diminution of your brand’s perception using cost efficient photography.

RATE STRUCTURE

In every case study, designers were virtually required to increase their rates. We find it is often a confidence issue. “I’m not sure I can go any higher.” But when we hear client comments like, “Jaime was more than worth the money,” “Sherry was so reasonably priced,” it’s an easy deduction that they are not charging enough. In all three case studies the designers raised rates a minimum of 50 percent (one raised her rate 150 percent). They did not lose one account, and rather increased their client load. Maybe offering services at a higher price shows the client you had the confidence to do so? You bet!



Sherry Lee offers branded gifts to reinforce branding.

IMPROVEMENTS

An important benefit of this process is that we find areas in need of improvement. It is common to hear that billing processes may need to improve; the designer is actually too nice; they need to set better expectations; staff increases are needed. All are just a few of the examples we hear regularly.

PRESS

New efforts were made to reach out to local media. Storylines were identified based on the unique attributes of the designer that were realized from the brand analysis. One example: the designer was viewed to have a keen understanding of lighting. We contacted local media to pitch a story on unique lighting which resulted in a page of editorial coverage for the designer. The editorial then became content for social media.

Each of the case studies in this article has a unique brand position. The press we garnered came directly from a clear understanding of their brands.

This is important — every one of these tools can easily be incorporated in to how you conduct your business. Embrace them and you too can enjoy the success illustrated in our three case studies.

Major marketers don’t talk about what they do. They relate as personal brands that connect and have a dialog with their client base. They know their core personality characteristics. I invite you to learn from them the same way Jaime, Sherry, Lynne and Liza have learned.

You are a brand personality. So, listen to the marketplace, look in the mirror and see the brand you envision yourself to be. You have to see it, to be it!