

“Branding for Success” from *The Female Brand*

In today’s over-communicated society, the brands that stand for something relevant and build positive perceptions are the ones that succeed. That’s why marketers figure out the big idea they can best use to leverage a brand and drum away at it consistently and evolve it slowly over time. It’s the same with people. In today’s over-competitive society, people who build a business identity – a personal brand – that has relevance and visibility in the marketplace will have the advantage. Personal branding is especially important for women because studies show that women are not as good at branding and marketing themselves.

Self-branding means being able to articulate a simple, clear expression of who you are – your “big idea” – and doing it consistently and delivering on it again and again. It means developing a marketing plan for your success.

Some women, concerned with authenticity, think branding is fake. But good branding is always built on authenticity, although it’s a simplified you that emphasizes what’s most valuable about your many aptitudes. All the complexity of who you are is too confusing.

When you start thinking of yourself as a brand, you discover how powerful it can be. Rather than be viewed generically as one of the worker bees, you’re someone that stands for something distinct and desirable – a brand.

Another approach marketers use in developing a brand identity or “big idea” is to think in terms of metaphor or analogy. What’s different about a product (or you) can be difficult to explain, and requires time for people to digest. But if you use a metaphor, anchoring the brand in something people already know, you short circuit the process and enhance its appeal. The key is to “anchor and twist,”ⁱ anchor the idea in something familiar but give it your own twist like Apple did with the iPhone. You don’t want to be an imitator, you want to be like “X on steroids” or “a cross between X and Y,” or “like A meets B.”

Another thing you can do is link different strengths to create your “big idea.” Look at Scott Adams, the creator of Dilbert. It’s hard to be truly brilliant at one thing, but almost everybody, Adam feels, can be in the top twenty-five percent of two or even three things. And that’s what he did in forming his own brand. What Adams strung together was drawing (Adams was a good but not great artist), business savvy (not great at office politics but a good observer), and humor. They were three things in which Adams was in the top twenty-five percent, but when he put them together he created a powerful “big idea” – which was Dilbert.

Branding is about finding and leveraging your edge. The goal is to be ourselves, have fun and succeed, and maybe even make the world a little better place.

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ⁱ Dan Heath and Chip Heath, “Anchor and Twist,” from “Made to Stick,” *Fast Company*, July/August 2008, 67.