

Your Brilliant Brand

Module 6: *The Brand Online* Transcript

Welcome to module six of ***Your Brilliant Brand***, and here we're going to bring your brand online. Now, I want to establish one key principle right at the beginning, and that is that branding is branding — online or offline. It has nothing to do with technology. It has to do with a human connection, a bond that you're building with your prospect or customer at an emotional, hearts and minds level. And when does this bond take place? It takes place in a single moment.

That's why we talk about the gut response to your product or company name, which I also call the brand moment.

Remember, this is the turning point which will largely decide whether some buys your product, or does not.

Now, does the online environment make any difference to the brand moment? Yes, because online everything moves so fast, because people are so impatient as they cruise around the Internet.

We know that people spend an average of around seven seconds when they visit a site, and that's the time frame in which you need to establish that emotional bonding connection. That's why I say the brand moment just got shorter.

So what does it take to create brand success in this high-speed online environment?

Well, to begin with, you need to establish instant clarity. People need to know what your business is all about. There's an old marketing saying, "The confused mind says no," which we can translate in the online world to "The confused mind says next," and they move on to another website.

You also need to establish instant targeting. As a visitor to your website, I need to know is this for me or is it not. If it's not for me, I'm going to move

on. If I'm in doubt about whether this is for me, I'm going to move on. So you might need to be very explicit. You might actually need to spell out in your headline who the site is for in order to establish the basis of that all-important human connection.

And thirdly, you need to establish instant relevance. So I'm visiting your site and I know what it's about and I know it's for me — but why should I care? Is there something here that touches a driving need, desire, concern, anxiety, aspiration of mine? If there's not, next. I'm moving on. So clarity, targeting, relevance - these are the three ingredients of successful branding online. By the way this principle applies to every form of online communication, not just the website. Your blog, your tweets if you're on Twitter, your marketing emails... Still we'll begin by looking at how we apply the brand to your website.

Let's take the example of my own BrandSecrets website — built for me by my colleague and web hero Andy Renk — just as a demonstration of some simple principles here. When you're thinking about branding your website, one of the things you need to be concerned about is where do people's eyes go first? You see, if there's a confusion about that, if the eye is allowed to drift around the site and there are competing elements, all crying for the same amount of attention, we're already setting up the confusion that pushes people away. You might think - and many people do - that the first place they should go is your company name or your product name. This is a big mistake unless you've got a hugely famous company, or unless your product is already established as a winning destination within the marketplace, there's no reason why people should have any response to your company or product name.

One caveat there, there is a reason to make the name prominent if the name itself communicates a benefit to the client. If the name is descriptive enough, that it already starts carrying the message about what you're all about. Nevertheless, you'll see how much prominence is given on this website to bold, clear headlines, and that normally is where you want attention to go first. What should the headline do? Three things - it should

establish what this is about, who it's for and why I should care, just those same three criteria we talked about before.

Let's talk about the logo. You notice that here it's placed in the top left-hand corner of the site. That is the conventional place. Why aren't we doing something more creative or original? Because we're following the principle that we don't want people to have any kind of effort when they're meeting the website in terms of finding the information they're looking for. If you start getting too clever and fancy and creative, you will actually create confusion. There's a great book under the title *Don't Make Me Think*. It's a book about good website design. And the title really says it all. You don't want people to have any kind of effort when they encounter your online communication. So following convention removes the effort and gives all the attention over to the actual content of the site.

Another branding point here, you'll see it right there, that picture of yours truly. It's a video course, and why do we have video here? Because we're looking to make a connection, a personal connection, and video is a tremendously emotionally powerful force for making a communication personal, for getting us free of that anonymity of the Internet. Remember, anybody can put up a website. You never know really who's behind it, what's going on here, are they responsible, are they going to be answerable for what they're promising. When you show yourself, when you talk directly to the customer through the form of video, you are establishing a level of trust that text alone can't do.

Apart from those points, look for simplicity, clarity, normal natural language in the communication and plenty of space so that people don't feel cluttered and overwhelmed and bombarded when they meet your website. And also make it very clear what you want folks to do next. As you can see on this site there's a clear call to action at every point.

Let's look at your website and do an action step where you review your website specifically from the point of view of branding.

Let's assume you've done that action step.

We're going to go on to look at how you bring branding to your blog. Now, with the blog, the same principles, of course, apply. The surprising thing is that many people do give attention to how their brand shows up on their website and then forget all about it when they come to the blog and they put out a blog that looks and sounds and reads like everybody else's. There is, of course, a visual dimension here. Today with the extraordinary tools available for creating your own blog quickly, you can create and establish a blog online in a very short time that has all the visual character and personality of a full website. So there's no reason for you to sacrifice your branding when you come to establish your blog. You'll find elsewhere in these courses great guidance and education and resources in terms of establishing a blog.

This blog by my friend and mentor Jeff Fagin is full of wisdom for your financial life. And you can see how he's made himself present — and accessible — with a strong personal brand.

We need to talk a little bit about the writing. The writing needs to have a form and a tone that is true to your brand. If your brand is very serious, it's very conservative, if it's very structured, then the writing of the blog needs to mirror that. There isn't one correct way to write a blog. And sometimes people are drifting these days into a blog speak as if all blogs should have the same hip, cool, casual, informal voice. No. They should all have a human voice, a voice that feels personal and it's easy to connect with, but that voice should vary according to the character of your brand.

The next thing to look at in terms of branding your blog is to avoid a sales approach on your blog. This is a general principle about social media, which include blogging and social networking and so forth. These are areas where you want to be more an educator than a salesperson. So use your blog to demonstrate your expertise and build respect and loyalty amongst a following of readers. These people will then be very good prospects for buying your products or service. So how do you shift people from learning

mode to buying mode? You can direct them to your website, or you can make an offer to the side of your blog that captures contact information.

So now, take a moment to look at your blog if you have one and review the branding on your blog. If you don't have a blog, now might be a great time to think about starting one and using our trainings here as a resource to learn about how to do that or to get help in setting up your blog.

Let's assume you've done this action step and we're going to move on to looking at how you brand yourself on social network sites. And I've taken quite a challenging one here as an example, and that's LinkedIn. In any social network site, you're somewhat constrained by the format of the site. You can't just imprint usually your own look and feel and structure because you've got to fit the mold, the template of that site. Nevertheless there are many opportunities for you to imprint and enrich and promote your brand through a social network site. You do need to be willing to get a little creative.

In most social network sites like LinkedIn, there is something called the profile where you write about yourself. And what most people do rather boringly is put down a conventional resume. Now, this is appropriate if you're using a social network site to look for a job, but here we are focused on promoting a business. And your personal resume, while it may be interesting and a little bit of it helps, is not a prime value in promoting your business. Frankly, how many people care which college you went to or which jobs you had in which cities and so forth? Actually you can use your profile to communicate messages of interest to your audience, messages that touch their concerns and needs that aren't focused just on your personal story.

The messages in this example, which is my own profile from LinkedIn, are all about education because the brand audience here is people in business who want to learn in order to be more successful. So I talk about learning to grow. I talk about the power and value of learning, and then I address myself very specifically to different target groups. Remember the three

criteria - what's it about, who's it for and why should I care. Not only that, but I give people links to websites where they can go and find out more if they're interested.

Now, nobody at LinkedIn will suggest that you should communicate like this in your profile. In fact, even the use of these headlines that I've got is not part of the format, but I just discovered there was nothing to stop me putting a bold, clear capital-letters headline and breaking the copy up in that way. I know as a copywriter that text is easier to read if you use headlines, especially headlines that are clear and simple and appeal to something of importance to the audience. So I use the profile as a piece of marketing communication, as something that helps establish and promote and enrich my brand online.

Assuming you already have presence on one of the social network sites, let's look at how your brand is established and enriched by the way you are handling your communications on those sites. There's an action step to help you do that. And when you've done that action step, we'll have reached the end of this module and of the program.

So take a moment then to do the module review and stay with us a few moments then while we wrap up this program with a summary of the key points. Let's assume you've done the final action steps here in this module, including the module review.

And what are the key points that we need to remember here about branding?

Well, first of all, a brand is an instant response to your name. That was what we began with that the brand is not a cosmetic thing. It's not something stuck on the outside of your marketing. It's at the very heart and soul of the connection that you make with your prospects and customers.

Secondly, this response that people have impacts their buying decisions. In fact, you remember the little slogan, the brand is the bond that drives the buying decision. How do we focus the brand? How do we get the brand to make the kind of impact that is going to positively support a decision to buy?

We use a tool called the brand triangle where we look at the audience at the base of the triangle - what do they care about, what matters to them. We look at your product or service - what about your product or service matches and meets and touches the important priorities of your audience. And thirdly, we look at the competitive space - what in the branding and marketing of your competition is missing, where are the gaps that we can fill.

When we know the three sides of the brand triangle, when we can find that sweet spot in the center, and that sweet spot we call the singular idea, the one idea that you and you alone will own and possess and promote in your marketplace. And that idea becomes the engine of every communication. It becomes the driving force of your marketing and your marketing communications.

Finally, once we've established that concept, we wrap around it an attractive brand profile, the personality, the promise, the story, the values, all those qualities that make the brand rich and attractive and interesting for someone to relate to.

When we've built the brand, we need to ensure that we sustain it in a disciplined manner. And what are the key elements of that discipline? Quality, congruency and consistency - quality to ensure that there's always a level of excellence in how we present our brand to the market; congruency to ensure that everything we do matches the core values and promise and meaning of our brand; and consistency to achieve that laser focus in the market that we're always imprinting the brand in the same way by the same standards wherever it shows up.

So that brings us to the end of ***Your Brilliant Brand***. And as always, your next steps are to set milestones, learn more and take action on what you've learned. So this is Jon Ward thanking you for joining me on this journey into the world of branding.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long tail on the 'n'.