

Developing Your Personal Brand

Article targeting Real Estate Professionals featured in Old Republic Home Protection's e-newsletter.

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What do BMW, Dove, and Apple have in common? Each of these companies has done a masterful job of branding itself. Even if you've never driven a BMW, you probably know it as the "ultimate driving machine." Most of us know that Dove Beauty Bar won't dry your skin like ordinary soap, and Apple fans epitomize brand loyalty every time they camp in front of an Apple Store awaiting the release of the latest iPhone.

You might imagine that only big corporations work to cultivate their brand, but some of the most successful real estate professionals have their own unique image. They are known throughout their community as the local "go to" for specific real estate needs, and their personal branding sets them apart from the competition.

What distinguishes you from your competitors? Are you known in your community for lending a hand to first-time buyers? Are you a strong negotiator on your clients' behalf? These two qualities are not mutually exclusive, but they are excellent examples of personal real estate brands. If you cultivate a reputation for a certain talent or area of expertise, you may begin to attract clients who value those traits, opening the door to greater client satisfaction and increased business!

What makes branding so effective? Human beings crave consistency! If you offer a cohesive message throughout your marketing efforts and *actually* live up to that message, you can fulfill that basic drive for consistency. By contrast, if your marketing message lacks consistency, it may confuse prospective clients and dilute your brand. Imagine if BMW advertised a budget car to compete with the Ford Fiesta. That would run contrary to its brand, and its image could quickly erode because consumers would no longer know what to expect from BMW. In the long run, this could hurt their overall company sales even if the budget model proved to be a short-term success. While there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to branding, most brands that try to be all things to all people are easily forgotten.

Once you find your brand, how do you develop it? Let's say you're a certified Seniors Real Estate Specialist®—feature your certification prominently on your business card. Make sure your website contains information and links to resources that seniors find helpful (e.g., articles about universal design, moving tips for seniors, etc.), and pass helpful articles along to prospective clients via e-mail or snail mail. Finally, consider joining local service organizations whose rosters feature a large number of seniors.

Developing a personal brand may require time and experimentation, but it's well worth the effort. Find a niche market that suits your interests and personality, become a master at serving that segment of the population, and build your brand around your area of expertise.