

## **How to Best Brand Your Business**

By Edward Segal, e-PRO, RCE, CAE

The following are excerpts from Segal's PR handbook, *Profit by Publicity*

### **The Power of Branding**

If I held up an unmarked bottle of brown liquid, you'd have no idea what was in it or how it is used. But if I told you that it was a bottle of Coca-Cola, then you'd know exactly what it was and what you could do with it. You'd even have a good idea of what it tastes like.

Such is the power of branding, which can immediately communicate the benefits and advantages of a product or company through the use of a name, logo, symbol or phrase.

If branding works for Coca-Cola, Google, Walt Disney Company and thousands of other companies and organizations, then it can certainly work for you to help quickly communicate who you are, what you do, how well you do it, etc.

Another example of effective branding is the campaign by the National Association of REALTORS® to publicize the benefits and advantages to the public of working with members of local REALTOR® associations.

NAR has spent millions of dollars in advertising to promote the professionalism and code of ethics of REALTORS®, and encourages its members to use the REALTOR® title and logo in all their marketing materials.

Deciding what you'd like your reputation or brand to represent takes some careful thought and consideration on your part.

When people hear your name, see your picture or look at your Web site or business card, what words or image do you want them to associate with you?

Whatever brand you select should be communicated in all that you do and say about your real estate business. But you must ensure that your image or reputation is consistent and reflects the real you, and can be justified and substantiated. Otherwise, the brand people will start to associate with you is that of "phony", "fraud", or "fake."

### **Exercise: What's Your Brand?**

This exercise will help you begin the task of identifying and selecting a brand identity for you or your real estate company.

Brands are too important to leave in the hands of one individual. If you own a real estate company, it's important that you consult with all members of your leadership team in deciding and adopting your corporate brand. If you are an individual real estate agent, seek feedback from your friends, family, neighbors and colleagues.

But this exercise can help you get started in the right direction.

1. On the left side of the page, list all the characteristics you'd like your target audience to know, understand or believe about you or your company. *Examples include knowing how to use various hardware and software to help your client, taking extra training to improve your professional skills, and a proven ability to sell property.*
  
2. On the right side of the page, jot down the word or phrase that best describes each of the characteristics you listed on the left side of the page. *Examples include "tech savvy", "top-producer" and "professional"*

**Characteristics**

**Short Description**

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3. Now list your services, expertise, activities or accomplishments that support the information you just listed. *Examples include selling 20 homes last year, earning appropriate designations from the National Association of REALTORS®, etc.*

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4. Finally, go back through the list above and prioritize the "brand identities" that best represent you or your company and are best supported by your services, expertise, or activities. Which ones do you feel most comfortable with, and for which you'd like to be known? *For example, specializing in helping people who are trying to buy their first home*

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The results of this exercise might look something like this:

*“I am a tech-savvy, top-producing real estate agent specializing in first-time home buyers in the Bay area. I have received several professional designations from the National Association of REALTORS® as proof of my knowledge, professionalism and expertise.”*

Next, you must pick the single most important thing you want to be known for. That one thing becomes the foundation for your brand.

### **Focus Your Branding Efforts**

There are some basic questions you should ask yourself to help focus your branding efforts. The answers will help guide the nature and direction of your public relations activities.

*Who or what do I want to promote?*

- Myself
- My company

*What aspect of my real estate expertise do I want to market?*

- Knowledge of local market conditions
- Real estate trends or predictions
- Home buyers
- Home sellers
- Second homes
- Resorts
- Vacation homes
- Rentals
- Land
- Condominiums
- Commercial investment properties
- Property management
- Baby boomers
- Seniors
- Ethnic or non-English speaking buyers
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*Who is my target audience?*

- Potential home buyers
- Investors
- Potential home sellers
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Peers
- Past clients

*What is my geographic focus?*

- Selected neighborhoods or communities
- A targeted town or city
- Metropolitan area or region
- Statewide
- National
- International

*How many other real estate agents or brokers am I competing against in my area?*

- Up to 50
- Up to 100
- Up to 500
- Up to 1,000
- Up to 5,000
- Up to 10,000
- Up to 20,000
- More than 20,000

**The bottom line in branding and marketing yourself is this:**

- It is important for real estate agents to develop a personal brand that will help people sit up and take notice and make it easier to achieve the success they want. You need a brand to help distinguish yourself from your competition.
- Your answers to the above questions will help identify and prioritize which aspects of your real estate business you want to promote and what you want to be known for
- You must define, identify and target the audiences who will be most interested in your real estate services and expertise.
- Live up to the brand you select.
- Promote your brand in all of your marketing activities and materials.

**About Edward Segal**

Edward Segal, e-PRO, RCE, CAE is the former marketing strategies columnist for *The Wall Street Journal's* [StartUpJournal.com](http://StartUpJournal.com), a PR consultant to more than 500 clients and press/secretary to members of Congress. He is the author of *Getting Your 15 Minutes of Fame* and the *Profit by Publicity* series of live and online classes, audiobook and how-to-reference guide for real estate agents and brokers. Segal is CEO of the Marin Association of REALTORS®. Visit his Web site at [www.ProfitbyPublicity.com](http://www.ProfitbyPublicity.com)