

The Brand Called You

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Peter Montoya is president of Peter Montoya Inc., where he employs strategists, designers and writers to craft the most innovative, effective personal branding strategies for thousands of clients across the country. In addition, he educates thousands of professionals yearly in seminars and workshops. Montoya has written two books, “The Personal Branding Phenomenon” and “The Brand Called You,” and he is the publisher of *Personal Branding* magazine. He regularly appears as a personal branding commentator on CNN, MSNBC and Fox News. Prior to his current work, Montoya worked for a nationally recognized sales trainer, living in 25 major cities and leading more than 2,000 training sessions for workers in a broad range of industries.

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I can see I have a very motivated group here. You want to make more money and enjoy your careers more. What I know is credible, even though it may sound incredible to some of you: there are realistic ways that you can double your income if you are serious about pursuing them. You must have a well-written marketing plan, a marketing system. Out of curiosity, how many of you feel you have a well-written marketing plan? I cannot give you a complete and total marketing plan; however, I can give you a very healthy shove in the right direction.

As you may already know, I also run the world’s only Personal Branding agency. Some of you might be thinking of cattle iron on people’s backsides – that’s not what Personal Branding is. A Personal Branding agency is an advertising agency that brands, markets and promotes people. I have almost forty employees, they are account executives, writers, designers, we craft custom brochures, postcards, logos, web sites, all the tools that you need to market your practice. We custom-design them all. Also, I have written two books, *The Personal Branding Phenomenon* and *The Brand Called You*, and I will conduct over one hundred seminars this year.

In general, most financial professionals are poor marketers. Most of them do not do it on purpose. No one strives to do bad marketing, rather we see what our competition does and we just go and copy it. Some of the bad marketing I’ve seen committed by Financial Advisors includes the following rotisserie of items – an impressive collection of throwaways and unwanted junk.

I’ve seen pens, pads of paper, maps on business cards. I’ve seen puzzles – this is a really dopey strategy, call me up for answers. How about the refrigerator magnets? The envelope opener? The envelope opener with the refrigerator magnet – sort of a two for one deal.

I’ve seen the paddle with the ball, the magic jar opener and the worst marketing piece that I have ever seen done by a financial advisor is a fly swatter shaped like a house.

Each time I see this piece, I still chuckle. I can imagine this financial advisor driving down the road saying, “Boy, I need to market myself. I’ve got it; I’ll get five thousand fly swatters, stick my name on it and give it to every prospect

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in town. And when anyone of my prospects is killing a pest, hopefully they will think of me.” What a wonderful association that is.

Now, are these marketing tools the most effective use of your time? Do they represent the most effective use of your dollar? Of course not. I am going to share with you how to spend your time and dollars more effectively.

Every marketing challenge and every branding challenge you have faced, we have already faced working with our clients. I guarantee you that you cannot give me a marketing or branding challenge we have not faced and conquered with great results with our existing clients.

We will talk about Personal Branding. Personal Branding is the most important philosophy you are currently using to attract new clients. And, you probably don’t even know that you’re using it. Maybe you do. How many have you said at some point in time, “The reason my clients work with me is because of me.” This is an industry built on personal relationships. To make your business work, you have to create personal relationships over and over. So, we’ll talk about what Personal Branding is, and why is it so critical to your success.

The second topic is branding strategy, and at the heart of that strategy, is specialization. Many of you are overloaded with clients that are not best suited for you. We’ll talk about how to attract more of the right kind of client, the kind of client that is more profitable to deal with.

Which skill sets are more critical to your success, your sales skills or your marketing skills? Marketing is correct. Marketing is more critical today, because you can be a first-class salesperson, the best salesperson in the world, and go flat broke if you have nothing but your sales skills to rely on.

What’s more important: your marketing skills, or your branding skills? Yes, the answer is branding. Many of you were just now shaking your heads, thinking: “What in the world is branding and what does it have to do with me? Branding is for big companies like Nike, Coca-Cola, and Microsoft, I am not doing branding. I running a little teeny financial planning practice, how could I be putting a brand out there?”

The fact is, you are. You have a Personal Brand. Let’s talk about what branding really is. You are probably doing more branding than you think. Here are some definitions that may make you think of the role branding plays in your business.

First of all is a short, very succinct definition of sales. Sales is convincing. To sell is to convince. To sell is overcome objections. You negotiate a sale. If you convince someone to buy, you get a check. You know you are using sales skills when your lips are flapping. Flapping lips indicate sales. But selling is usually a result of other business activities. Usually, selling follows marketing.

The purpose of marketing is to generate sales. Marketing is generating new business. Marketing is getting in front of prospects. Direct mail is part of marketing. Advertising is part of marketing. Yellow page ads are part of marketing. Seminars are part of marketing.

I’ll make you a bet 80 percent of you, if I asked you one-to-one, would say to me, “Peter, I don’t do any marketing at all. All I do is work off referrals.” Referrals, even if they are completely by accident, are still an element of marketing. So even if you consider them accidental or incidental, referrals, in the greater scheme of things, are still part of marketing activity.

Marketing is one part of branding, and branding’s job is to influence. We are influenced by brands. We associate value with brands. That’s why branding is everything; that’s where you start, before you sell, before you market. Branding changes the way people think. It changes perception of a product or a service or a person. It builds value.

Whether you realize it or not, you currently have a brand. What would you guess is the most important goal of your branding? What is the most important purpose of your branding? Now, I have done enough of these seminars to hear a gamut of answers, and most of you will say something along these lines:

“The most important goal my brand is to differentiate me from the competition.”

“The most important goal of my brand is to create trust with a prospect or a client – I speak the truth, and hey, they believe in me.”

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“The most important goal of my brand is to create what is called an identity in the marketplace, so they will know who I am and what I do.”

Sure, the most important goal of your business is to attract new business, and these prospecting goals are all goals of your brand. However, they are not the most important part of your brand. They are nowhere near the most critical aspect of your brand. I’m familiar with all of those ideas, I’ve read those ideas, I’ve thought those ideas, and they are important ideas – but they are not the crux of your brand.

Branding is really about the meat and potatoes of your business. Branding is really about attracting and maintaining quality clients. That’s what branding actually is. It is actually getting and keeping new business. That’s what should get you excited.

You may look at your priority list and you might say, “Here are my priorities: I have to make sure that I have a good operation, I have to make sure I stay compliant, I have to make sure I keep my books in order, I have to make sure I prepare financial plans or tax returns in a timely manner.”

Certainly, you might also prioritize attracting and maintaining quality clients. On your list of priorities, where does this one fall? Is it your first priority? Number 1? 2? 3? 4? 5? If you are saying anything lower than “1” you’re facing a problem, because without this – without clients – the operations, the compliance, the education we do are worthless. The number one priority you have is attracting and maintaining quality clients, and that’s what branding does for you.

Now most of you think branding is fairly empirical. You think branding is business cards, slogans, advertisements, that’s how you build a brand. Advertising and marketing are part of branding, but branding is actually a much broader discipline.

Imagine if I sat before you, and you were my prospect, and I tried to hard close you. Would that be part of my brand? Of course it would. What if I tried to sell you, and I was meek, no matter what I did, I just couldn’t ask for the sale? That would be part of the brand, too. So the entire scope of the sales process is part of branding.

How about your marketing? Imagine yourself doing some really high-profile marketing. If you budgeted for a blimp, radio ads, television advertising, that would create one perception about you. Or maybe you do almost under-the-radar marketing, you have a very tight sphere of influence with professional referrals, maybe you do some high-end networking. Those two marketing paths have an effect: they create different perceptions. Different ways marketing lead to different perceptions in branding. So marketing is part of branding.

How about customer service? How quick do you return phone calls? How do you answer the phone, how do you manage the phones? All customer service is part of branding as well.

How about your interior design? If I walk into your office, and I find just a one-room office, papers strewn everywhere, and I see you and only you behind one desk, that would create a very specific perception about your brand. If I walked into your office and it had marble floors and cherry wood walls, I have a different perception. Depending on the circumstances, neither one is wrong or right. All I am saying is that they are very different perceptions. So the design of your office is part of branding as well.

That’s not all. We can look at you as a person, we can look at your image, how you dress, how you walk, how you talk, how you speak to your clients, and to whom you’re married. Who you married and who your kids are also create a perception about you as well.

So, ultimately, what’s branding? It’s who you are, your personal image, your customer service, it’s your sales, it’s your marketing, it’s also all the products and services you offer. If one day in the past you were a Insurance Professional, and now you’re a Insurance Professional who offers investment advice, then as soon as you add investment advice, does that change the perception about you? You bet it does. So your products and services change perception of your brand as well.

All your sales, all your marketing, all your customer service, all the delivery of your products and services – in sum, in total, what aspects of your business create your brand? Everything. Everything you do is actually branding.

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Everything you do to attract and maintain quality clients.

Now what position would you like this brand to hold in the marketplace? Would you like people to think of it when they have the need, or before they have the need? Obviously, the answer is before. Unfortunately, much of your marketing tries to get to your prospects right at the moment they decide they have the need. The best brands on the planet know how to penetrate people's minds with personality, products or services or their company identity regardless of whether there's an immediate need or not.

How is that commercial supposed to sell beer? Now that's a good question. How's a commercial supposed to sell beer, when it doesn't talk about beer at all?

If I told you to sell beer, most of you would get out there and talk about beer. You would talk about the barley, the malts, and the brewing and the distilling, most of you could probably assign a beta number to the distilling process. You would tell your prospects that you were very qualified to sell beer and you would work hard to get your CBS: your Certified Beer Specialist designation. You would try to build your credibility.

But ... the best brands on the planet do not spend nearly as much time talking about their product as they do building personalities for their products, and this makes us more apt to buy.

The first rule of branding is to emotionally predispose a prospect into a business relationship. You and I are business people and sales people, but at our very skeptical core, we are also consumers. As consumers, do we love or loathe being sold? Do we love it, or loathe it? We loathe it. We hate being sold.

Now, any one of us can walk into a Gap clothing store, and inside the door is a person that works for The Gap called a greeter. Now their job is not to sell anything; rather, their job is to make sure every person who enters that store is greeted. You walk inside and they say, "Hello, welcome to The Gap," and you respond with "just looking" or some variation on "get out of my way," and you swerve around them as quickly as possible. Now, the greeter is usually an 18-year-old high school student. Many of you have kids older than that, yet you are petrified of this teenager. What

are we so afraid of? Being sold? You and I, your clients, we're all quite educated, quite cynical, yet we have the highest sales resistance on the planet. We hate to be sold.

The good news is this: we hate to be sold, but we love to choose to buy. That is why branding comes first. When you brand yourself correctly, people show up pre-sold.

Now I would like to conduct a survey here in the audience: How many of you have received a phone call recently from someone you didn't know? They called you up, and said, "Oh, my friend is using you and I can sure use your services, when can you meet with me?" How many of you have gotten that phone call? Please raise your hands. I am going to give you ten phone calls like that a week, every week for a year. One year from today you will have received 520 phone calls from quality prospects saying, "I've heard about you – you sound great, sign me up."

How great a business year are you about to have? Not much of a year? A very good year. You don't sound very excited about the year of you.

I can find the absolute worst Insurance Professional in your city. The absolute worst. A Insurance Professional who should have lost his license, who wears a clip on tie and is not too sharp. I can give them ten phone calls a week, every week for a year. One year from today, they, too, will receive 520 calls from quality prospects that say "sign me up." How great a year are they going to have? Not a good year, or a really great year? Yes, they will have a really great year. Why is that? They'll get 520 phone calls from quality prospects.

See, here is the thing about being a better, more successful Financial Advisor, it is this: being a better, more successful Financial Advisor isn't about being a better financial advisor, it's about being a better marketer, a better brander.

Now here is my guess: I'm guessing that this moment, here and now, is not the first moment that you have thought of this. You have heard these thoughts about branding before, yet most of you – still – still have not read a single book on marketing or branding in the last year.

Most of you spend less than 5% of your time marketing, and most of you spend less than 5% of your money actively

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investing in marketing. “Know what you do” and “do what you know” are two different things. You have to take branding and marketing much more seriously because branding and marketing is your business.

Today, your biggest challenge is this: your biggest challenge is to become more people’s “blank” than anyone. More people’s Financial Advisor, more people’s Insurance Professional, more people’s Employee Benefits Specialist or whatever you call yourself, that’s what you put in that blank and that is your biggest challenge today. Would you agree?

Today, this business is all about relationships. Given a choice of two situations, which one would you pick? Situation A: you provide world-class service, great service, everyone in town wants it, everyone needs it, and it’s also at a great price, however ... everybody hates your guts, you are a miserable person to be around, that is situation A.

Situation B: you provide good service, not phenomenal service, but good service, everyone in town loves you, you’re wonderful at building relationships, and you are really able to engender trust. Which situation would you pick for greater success and happiness? Situation B.

Today, relationships grease the wheels. A relationship allows us to deliver our most important service. Your most important service today is advice. The only way you can deliver advice is if your clients trust you.

The last person we trust is the person who says “trust me.” So knowing that, how do we build trust? Well, here are two keys to building trust.

The first key to building trust is rapport, we are more apt to trust someone that we like. The second key to building trust is integrity, you got to walk your talk and do what you say you are going to do. Your words and actions have got to be completely and totally consistent.

Imagine yourself sitting before your very best client. Most likely you have a great relationship and a high degree of trust. You say to your best client, “Mr. Client, I recommend we do A, B, and C with your investments.” how is your best client likely to respond, and what words would they say? They would say, “Okay. You’re the expert. This is the way I can get it done.”

Now picture the same conversation with your worst client. Imagine your worst client, someone with whom you probably have a poor relationship and a low degree of trust. You say to your worst client, “Mr. Client, I have done all my homework, all my analysis, and I recommend we do A, B, and C with your investments.” How is your worst client likely to respond? We know how. “I’ll think about it, I’ll get back to you later, I want to get a second opinion from my gardener before I take your advice.” Terrible, miserable working relationship.

If this business is all about relationships, why are you promoting your products and services first? If this business is all about relationships, why are many of you concocting corporations which you then hide behind, or hide inside. Let me talk about that for a minute.

Many of you have opted to promote a corporate identity instead of your individual identity. I know the reasons why you have done that. You’ve read Michael Gerber’s book and you want to create a firm. You want to make sure you can sell it. However, while I know the reasons you have done that, let me ask you some questions.

Who do you trust more, corporations or people? The answer is people.

Given a choice of buying a service from a corporation or buying a service from a person – the service is exactly the same quality, the same price – who would rather have the service delivered to you by? A person.

I have done this enough to know why you choose individuals over corporations. Usually, people choose individuals over corporations for three reasons.

The first one is a relationship. With your local professional you have a relationship that is enjoyable, you get the sense that they know you and you know them. It feels good to be in a relationship.

Reason number two: accountability. If a corporation makes a mistake and you want to complain, who do you call these days? Some 800 number answered by a call center in Pakistan. It’s an uncomfortable, unpleasant situation and most of us just say, why bother? Why even complain, they’re not going to change. I’m not going to talk someone who actually matters.

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The third reason you work with a local professional versus a large corporation is that the groundwork is laid for an atmosphere of mutual goodwill. Have you ever had a client ask you how business was, and you could tell that the reason they asked that was because they wanted to hear that you were doing well? How many of you have had clients express interest in the health and success of your business, raise your hands, isn't that amazing. They want to see you do well, they want to see you succeed.

On the other hand, what is our perception of corporations that make a lot of money? They are greedy. So we choose people over corporations because of the accountability, because of the relationship and also because they want to see us succeed. If that is the case, why are most of you promoting yourself as corporations instead of people?

If you have 300 or 400 or 500 clients and ask them who provides them with financial advice or financial services, most likely, they will not cite a corporation. What's the name that's going to come out of their mouths? Probably your name. So why do we convolute the process by promoting this corporation instead of the person?

I suggest you start promoting your Personal Brand, because when you do it differentiates you. It makes you unique in the marketplace, and it also connects you to human beings, versus being another cold, greedy, and calculating corporation. Start thinking about yourself first, instead of some corporate facade. Relationships make the business cogs move today.

Let's talk strategy. The most important branding strategy is specialization. Specialization, this is what builds the most important brands. Conglomeration can kill a brand. What major retail store went bankrupt in 2000, trying to be all things to all people? K-Mart. K-Mart could not figure out what its brand was. For 15 years, its brand got more and more diluted. It tried to be all things to all people. Then they got a new CEO in the mid-Nineties to specialize the brand, and for a while the CEO said, "You know what, we'll be the high-quality, low-price discount retail store." Well, they couldn't own that position in the marketplace because who owns that position? WAL-MART. So, they said, "Forget that, we'll ditch that strategy, we will become

the high-quality discount retail store." Well, they couldn't be the high-quality discount retail store because what brand owns that position in your mind? Target. So, what does K-Mart mean today in the marketplace? Bankruptcy, dirty stores, and Martha Stewart. Bad company, all the way around.

Now, K-Mart is attempting to position itself as "high style, low price." The only way that will work for K-Mart is if their stores live up to the advertising. You actually go to the store and see high style for low price. That is their challenge.

Now, many of you are trying to duplicate the K-Mart strategy, being all things to all people. This is rather difficult. I have a client named Tom Roberts out in Albany, New York. When Tom got into the business, what he decided to do was to specialize in the one apartment building that he lived in. For the first year, all he did was door knock. This is in the mid-Nineties. He door-knocked, he cold-called to get referrals in one mid-rise apartment building. By the end of his first year, he had 80 clients in one building in one year. It worked pretty well, so he decided to forge on with the strategy. He went to the building next door, he dominated that building, and once that building was dominated he went on to the next, and so on and so on. By the end of last year, he was working 11 mid-rise buildings, one of which he lived in, and every one of his 1,000 clients lived within a three-minute walk of his apartment. But here's the kicker to me. Yes, he did make \$750,000 last year, but, of that 1,000 clients in those 11 mid-rise buildings, what was his market share? His market share is 80% plus.

What's your market share? You probably don't have any idea, because your idea of marketing has no parameters. No target. If you can fog a mirror and walk on your hind legs, I want your business – I'm the right professional for you. You try to be all things to all people and the danger is, you could become, as the saying goes, "nothing to nobody."

You see, today, in your line of business, your strength is also your weakness. I think today, your strength is your low barrier to offering new products and services. With a couple of licenses you can do anything you want. You can

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do long term care, you can do property/casualty, you can do health insurance, you can offer mutual funds, you can manage assets, you can perform tax and estate planning.

What kind of people can you work well with...Pre-retirees, retirees, seniors and widows, business owners, professionals, executives, or different types of small business owners? The world opens up to you.

What's your weakness? You can do anything you want, and most of you are killing yourselves trying. The worst thing you can do today is to be all things to all people. The hardest thing to do in this business today is keep focus.

That's why opportunity is the biggest expense in business. Lance Armstrong today is on top of the Personal Branding world. For example, let's just say that Lance Armstrong gets 10 opportunities per month. Ride your bike here, speak to my group, endorse my product, be in this commercial, show up for this charity. Let's say gets 10 opportunities a month – he might get more. Out of 10, how many do you think in accepts? One, maybe two tops.

The average Financial Advisor, like yourselves, probably receives ten opportunities a month. "Come with me, come to this networking meeting, there will be some new types of clients for you." "Hey, I can refer you some business, I'm a professional, I'll refer you some clients." "Hey, I'm a client of yours, my grandma needs you help, why don't you work with her." "Hey, I'm Estate Planner, let's do a seminar together, you bring your clients, I'll bring mine." The average Financial Advisor probably gets ten opportunities a month. Out of ten, how many do you accept?

Eleven. Exactly. You try to do it all, and you try to be all things to all people. And that can kill you. It is part of the grind in this business, and it doesn't make sense. So what I'm going to tell you almost sounds like an oxymoron. But you have to focus on less to do more.

You have to focus on less to get more. Focus on a smaller market or fewer products and services to get more clients and get more revenue. I know it sounds strange: "Focus on less to get more." But you must reject the prospects you don't want in order to attract the clients you do want.

Great branding repels as strongly as it attracts. It turns off as many people as it turns on. You see, brands today

are very polarized. Bill O'Reilly – people love him, people hate him. Michael Moore – people love him, people hate him. Madonna – people love her, people hate her. Barbara Streisand – people love her, people hate her. Brands are loved and hated, Personal Brands too, and the challenge in front you is, you are too darn likable.

Let me explain why that's a challenge to your business. Number one, you like helping people, you like to solve problems, Number two, you don't like turning away money. You don't like saying no to new sales. This can be a problem. The thing you have to do is this, you actually have to stop and repel. You must turn away X in order to attract Y. The best branding provokes action and reaction.

I was recently at a car wash down in Southern California and was actually in the lobby, in a client waiting area, and inside this lobby area was some marquee advertising. Ads for local professionals and there services, the gardener, the REALTOR®, the wedding planner, the guy that does the custom cabinetry, the people that usually advertise. And as I was sitting there, this REALTOR® was negotiating a purchase of an ad. She asked how much the ad was. The sales manager said it was \$500. She said, "\$500 a month! That's an awful lot of money. How many new clients will I get out of it?" That's a pretty reasonable question. She knows the cost, what's the benefit? The sales manager says. "It all depends on the ad. Let me see your ad."

She pulls out an ad – I can see it. It says her name, and her company name, and had the following bullets:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Retail
- Industrial
- New Sales
- Resales
- Leasing
- Renting
- Relocation
- Consulting

The sales manager said, "If you offer all those services, surely at least one person will need your services in the next month."

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She was only up on that marquee for one month. Why? She probably didn't get any business out of it. Now most of my audiences scoff and laugh and say "How silly of that REALTOR® to have all those bullets on there, and trying to be all things to all people."

But, here is my guess. I could look at your website, I could look at your brochure, I could look at your business card and it probably has the following bullets.

- Property
- Liability
- Automobile
- Worker's Compensation
- Marine
- Accident
- Health
- Group Medical
- **Annuities**
- IRAs
- Mutual Funds
- Life Insurance

Why did you do this? You're afraid you might miss somebody out there, and in trying not to miss anybody, you end up missing everybody. You can still do that. I'm not saying you can't offer a wide selection of products and services, but if you offer a wide selection of products and services, you do not want to work for everybody in town.

Who would you select: the person who does everything reasonably well, or the expert in the field? Now let's say, hypothetically, you're faced with going up the river. Let's say, for instance, that the governing agency that gives you the right to operate is very angry at you, and they want to take away your license, throw you in jail, and sue you for thousands of dollars. All of the sudden, you are in deep legal hot water.

Would you either call some friendly acquaintance who happens to be an attorney and have them represent you; would you search out a specialist that handled just these kind of cases the government, whatever the case might be. Who would you call, the generalist or the specialist. The specialist.

Why would you call the specialist? Two reasons.

The first reason you call a specialist is knowledge. Now, they probably charge more per hour. However, they probably take fewer hours to get the job done – because they know more about the situation than a generalist. There is a very good chance that if you go to a generalist, you might have learned more about your problem than they have.

The second reason that brings you to a specialist is experience. There is a statement on many of your brochures that sounds roughly like this, if I may paraphrase: "Past performance is not an indication of future results." Is that statement true, or is that statement false? That statement is false. Keep it on your brochures – I'm not saying remove it, but realize that in reality, the best indication we have of future results is past performance. You don't want a new attorney who's wet behind the ears who says "Golly gee, I'll do everything I can to save your hide." You want the attorney who has been there a thousand times before, and will be there a thousand times again. You want the person that lives, breathes, and sleeps this kind of law. You want the specialist.

Here are two all-important questions. One ... who are most people interested in hiring to solve any given problem: a generalist, or a specialist?

Yes – a specialist.

So, two ... why are so many of you promoting yourselves as generalists? Why, then, are you trying to be all things to all people? I am going to recommend that you specialize.

Step number one is specialization. First of all, specialization builds perceived value. When you specialize, you are promoting the thing you do best – and hopefully, promoting it to the most receptive audience. That ideal, receptive audience is called a target market.

How do you choose your target market?

There are a couple of different ways of targeting a market. One way of targeting a market is targeting specific kinds of businesses. You can target businesses by industry, by revenue, by employee count, by ownership type or by company event. So you can say, "I specialize in manufacturing companies who have less than \$10 million revenue,

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100 employees, who are independently owned and actually downsizing.” You could say that is your specialty, for example. That’s one way of doing it.

The second way to target a market is by consumer. Most of you, probably 75% of you or more, are targeting the consumer marketplace. In the consumer marketplace, your market can be subdivided any number of characteristics. You can look at lifestyle – golfers, skiers, auto enthusiasts. You can appeal to an interest group – defined by political affiliation, possibly age or gender, possibly by occupation such as firefighters, attorneys, engineers.

I have a client who is an ex-engineer, he used to work for Boeing. He retired from Boeing, then became a financial advisor. Now, as a financial advisor, he works only with engineers. How many of you have experienced the sheer joy of working with an engineer? Had that good time? Yeah, it’s a party all the way around. He works only with engineers, and he does incredibly well for two reasons. The first reason is, when he sits across the table from an engineer, they do not see him as a salesperson.

Where does he get 80% of his new business, where does it come from? Yes, he gets business from Boeing, referrals from other engineers, but believe it or not, that’s the other 20% percent of his business. Where does the lion’s share come from? Well here’s what kills me: 80 % of his new business comes from marketing himself to other financial advisors who want to get rid of their engineer clients.

If you think about it, the hardest thing about getting rid of a client is that you feel guilty about firing that client. But if you had someplace where an engineer could go and be with his own kind, wouldn’t it be better for all parties involved? It’s like a Star Trek convention, I don’t mind they have it, just let them be together.

Also we can look at ethnic or religious background. I made a statement earlier today, which one of my attendees in the past really took to heart. I said, “You must repel in order to attract.” My audience member, his name is Bill Bennett, he’s in Detroit, Michigan, and he decided he wanted to work with Christians. He had been doing all things for all people. He has been doing fairly well, making about \$600,000 in gross production. His best clients, the

ones whom he liked working with best, were Christians. So he decided to specialize in what he called morally-based financial planning. He marketed only to Christians: he talked about his morally-based financial planning seminar. That was the phrase he used in his invitation. He used scriptural passages as a way of explaining his investment philosophy. His business revenue grew phenomenally last year – from \$600,000, he is now on track for \$1.8 million in 2004. He is going to triple his business in 18 months.

Why? That target market is very cohesive, very strong today, and they are looking for someone just like him. His brand is very, very attractive, but he is willing to give up business in order to attract business. In branding and marketing, the religious specializations are working very well recently. And so does branding based around life events – retirement, divorce, bereavement, change of career, change of address.

So, you choose your target market. You also need to define your geographic region, what geography are you willing to work within.

I’ll give you two scenarios. Here is Scenario A: this is called the shotgun method. You have a \$10,000-a-year marketing budget and you spend your marketing money in response to opportunities. Your mentality is, you have to spend money to make money. You realize that and so you say, “You know what, as opportunities arise, I’ll spend the money.” ZYX Business Journal calls you up and says “Hey, we’re running a special, first-time advertisers only pay \$500,” and you say, “Sure, I’ll give it a shot.” A buddy calls you up and says, “Hey, let’s do a seminar together, \$1,500. You say, “Sure, I’ll give that a shot.” You go to a marketing seminar, you learn about direct mail. You say, “Sure, I’ll give that a shot,” and your marketing during the course of the year amounts to this shotgun approach. It’s just done wherever you see opportunities to spend money. That’s Scenario A.

Scenario B: we’ll call this the target approach. You decide to target one subdivision of 500 homes. Every bit of your advertising, every bit of direct mail, all your events are directed to just these 500 homes. However, your marketing budget is only \$5,000 – half as much as in Scenario A.

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Which scenario will be more effective? And by effective, I mean this: which scenario will attract more new clients? The shotgun approach or the target approach?

You got it. Targeting. Which one are you mostly doing? Shotgun.

Why are you doing the shotgun approach? Once again – you are afraid you might miss out on something. And in trying not to miss out on something, you miss about \$10,000. Say “bye-bye” to that money. And you are also missing great opportunities you can have just by knowing who your target market is.

Step one ... choose your target market. Step two ... design your products and services for that target market. This one paragraph in your seminar manual contains one idea that is the most important idea in my whole presentation and the most important idea of your whole business. This one paragraph here, as simple as it is, contains The Big Idea of the Day. What is the biggest underlying assumption about marketing? What is the underlying thrust of marketing? What drives marketing? Here it is. You might want to write this down. The fundamental function of marketing is this: it is to find an unmet need and fill it.

In contrast, most financial professionals operate from a sales paradigm. A sales paradigm is not about filling the need of the marketplace, but filling the need of the salesperson. The mentality is this: I need to eat this month, therefore you need to buy my product.

That mentality will get you only so far. It will get you to about \$150,000 a year in financial services terms. But if you are really serious about \$200,000, \$300,000, a half-million or million-dollar business, I am going to suggest you start focusing on the need of the marketplace.

When you look at the world's most successful corporations, most successful brands, they succeeded by filling the need of the marketplace better than anybody else. Domino's Pizza, first home-delivery pizza. Williams-Sonoma, first high-end kitchen appliance store. Charles Schwab, first discount broker. They found an unmet need and filled it better than anyone else.

So here is the all-important question: what is the unmet need that you fill better than any of your competi-

tors? Now, many of you may not know the answer to that question – and the reason you don't is twofold. Number one, you don't know who your target market is and number two, you haven't asked.

The truth is the financial services business is very mature, and it's very saturated, so it's very unlikely that you are going to offer a product or service unique in the marketplace. Most likely, your uniqueness is a matter of packaging or integration. It's the way you deliver a product or service that will make you unique in the market place. So it's either how you package it – the consumer perception of how you're different – or how you integrate your services that will drive your success.

What I suggest you do is talk to your clients, talk to your prospects, and talk to your professional referrals. In doing so, you find out what their unmet needs are, and you can start to develop your products and services to meet the need of the marketplace.

Someday, you will be at a conference or meeting, and you will hear from a top producer. The top producer will say, “I made \$1 million doing ‘X’ and you can make a million doing ‘X’ too.” Well, maybe you can and maybe you can't. Maybe it was right for him with his target market in his part of the country. With the seismic psychographic shifts that are happening out there, maybe it'll work for you and maybe it won't. But don't just run off on some great idea you hear. You have to go out to your marketplace, you have to talk to your clients and prospects and find out what their unmet needs are, and develop your services around them.

That idea is most important concept in the whole day. One of the questions I frequently get is: “Peter, how much should I spend on marketing?” Could you spend tens of thousands of dollars on marketing and make zero in sales? The answer is yes. Could you spend nothing on marketing and make hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales? Yes, you could.

How could you spend tens of thousands of dollars on marketing and make zero on sales? Well basically, you market a product that nobody wants.

How could you make hundreds of thousands of dollars without spending any money on marketing? Well, you

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have a product that you sell to one person; they love it so much, they tell everybody in town.

So when you look at your marketing budgets, many of you think, “How much should I spend? How much should I spend on direct mail, what should my response rate be?” Before you spend anything, there’s one other critical matter: is your product right for your marketplace?

I am going to give you four different models – and somewhere on a blank paper, you might want to draw these different models.

The first one is a triangle, and you can label it “A”. Triangle A is wide on the bottom and narrow at the top. Label the wide bottom of Triangle A “Products and Services”. At the top of Triangle A, label that “Target Market”.

By comparison, Triangle B is upside down. Triangle B has a very narrow bottom. And a very wide top. Please label the narrow bottom of Triangle B “Products and Services”, and the very wide top you can label “Target Market”.

So Triangle A, the first triangle, you have a wide selection of products and services. You can say, I do tax planning, I do investment advice, I do insurance, and ... I do it only for retirees. And only for older retirees, and only older retirees in El Paso. Wide selection of products and services; very narrow target market.

That’s one solution. That would work for most of you. The other solution is Triangle B. Look at a Triangle B. You have a very narrow service offering. I only do tax preparation, and ... I do it for anyone and everyone in town. I do it for small businesses, pre-retirees, new retirees, entrepreneurs and business owners. I have a narrow service; I do it for everybody in town.

What you should not do, however, is adopt Model C. This is not a triangle, but a square or a rectangle. Model C is being all things to all people. It’s offering a wide selection of products and services to a wide target market. This model is a square or a rectangle. At the bottom, you have

products and services. At the top is your target market: all different types of clients.

Model C will kill you. I don’t mean that literally, but the problem with Model C is that you are constantly considering new types of operational challenges, new types of clients, new types of products, new types of services, new compliance issues you haven’t dealt with before, and new complaints you haven’t had before.

Model C is very difficult, because you are constantly reinventing the wheel for every client that walks in the door. Model C will cause you to work more hours, and usually earn less income with more headaches and stress. Model A or Model B will work very, very well.

Now, there is actually a fourth model as well. Model D looks just like a straight line: a narrow target market, and narrowly focused products and services.

I have a client named Jeff Brown out in Southern California, and his target market is just Southern California Edison employees. That’s all. It’s a very narrow target. And he only does retirement planning for them. Retirement planning for Southern California Edison employees.

Some of you actually thought that branding had to do with image. You assumed that branding was taking something really junky and making it look pretty. Or maybe you assumed that branding is taking a product or service and just marketing it. You can market lots of products today, but marketing is not enough. It’s got to be the right product for the marketplace, and branding is comprehensive that way. Branding means determining what the product is, who the target market is and also how you promote it.

Bottom line: you must craft your branding, your marketing, your specialization, and your services carefully to appeal to the right market – not everybody, but your desired clients. And what we call branding has a powerful, career-changing effect: you will lose the time-wasting, soul-draining clients you don’t want and pick up the clients you want, and your life and business will be better for it.

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“I’m not a brand! I’m an individual!” some of you might say and they are, of course, right, but from the perspective of a potential employer, students (whether undergraduate or postgraduate) who are looking to advance in their careers, are essentially commodities. We’ve all heard of job advertisements attracting far more applications than the number of available vacancies, or of jobs which are never really advertised. How then do you manage to stick out and get employers to notice you? The answer is: By looking after your personal brand. Start with a short & meaningful introduction “ think