

THIS BOOK IS IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
GEORGE STEPHEN ALEXANDER, MY LITTLE BRO.  
PASSED AWAY 28<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2015,  
AGE 46

I FEEL YOU WITH ME, ALWAYS.



CREDIBILITY  
BREAKTHROUGHS

# CREDIBILITY BREAKTHROUGHS

HOW TO ESTABLISH INSTANT CREDIBILITY  
AND TRUST WITH PROSPECTS AND CLIENTS

STEWART ANDREW ALEXANDER

DISCLAIMER AND/OR LEGAL NOTICES: The information presented in this book represents the views of the author as of the date of publication. The author reserves the rights to alter and update their opinions based on new conditions. This book is for informational purposes only.

The author and the publisher do not accept any responsibilities for any liabilities resulting from the use of this information. While every attempt has been made to verify the information provided here, the author and the publisher cannot assume any responsibility for errors, inaccuracies or omissions. Any similarities with people or facts are unintentional.

Copyright © 2015 by Stewart Andrew Alexander.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written, dated and signed permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copy-right law.

Credibility Breakthroughs/ Stewart Andrew Alexander. —1st ed.

ISBN 978-1512326444

# CONTENTS

A Note to the Reader	iii
[1] Unleashing Credibility and Trust to Overcome Your Competition	1
[2] How Establishing Instant Credibility and Trust Takes Your Business to the Next Level	11
[3] Breaking Down the Building Blocks of Credibility and Trust	21
[4] The Dangers of Competing Without Credibility and Trust	29
[5] Common Barriers to Establishing Instant Credibility and Trust	37
[6] Five Common Misconceptions about Building Instant Credibility and Trust	45
[7] Five Common Pitfalls to Avoid When Building a Personal Brand	55
[8] How to Instantly Establish Credibility through Personal Branding	63
[9] Barbara Corcoran: A Case Study of Establishing Instant Credibility and Trust	91
[10] Turning Impressions Into Conversions	98
Conclusion	103
One Last Thing...	105
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	107



# A Note to the Reader

I WROTE THIS BOOK because I believe that entrepreneurship and innovation have a significant role to play in making our world a better place for our children, and their children's children.

There are many men and women who have either started, or who have an existing business that has the capacity to disrupt life as we know it.

They create products and services that help us to have more time, more money, better health, better lifestyles and live happier and longer lives.

Maybe you're one of those courageous people that has followed their entrepreneurial spirit... their entrepreneurial gift?

You have a gift to serve, support and solve problems but your problem is, you don't know how to share your gift with the world.

You don't know how to present yourself in such a way that when people come into contact with your creations, solutions and innovations - their only choice is to say YES! I want to work with YOU!

Nobody told you that when you start a business, in addition to your natural gift, your skill, your passion, you also have to be an equally

skillful marketer. And therein lies the problem that affects entrepreneurs *just like you* the world over.

It's a fact, you have to give people reasons to reach out to you, something that 'captures their attention' within seconds of coming into contact with your business. It's not entirely fair, but that's just how it works.

Studies upon studies have proven that people's attention spans are getting shorter. You have to act now by adjusting the way you think and market to stay relevant.

My vision is to help you and many more like you, to become the easiest choice your prospects and clients will ever have to make when choosing a professional to solve their problems. That's why I wrote this book.

## WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

If you are a coach, author, speaker, trainer, consultant, or professional entrepreneur working in the online or offline world, you need to appear credible (in the eyes of your prospects and clients), to be granted the opportunity of helping them to achieve the success they desire.

Credibility and trust is the key to selling anything.

For anybody to buy from you, they must first trust you. However, for them to trust you, you must first appear to be credible and trustworthy to them.

You must bring something to the table that breaks down their natural skepticism and gives them sufficient reasons to choose you over your competitors.

“Establishing instant credibility and trust is the glue that holds the most crucial parts of your business together. It's the foundation of every marketing piece, every conversation, and every past, present and

future transaction.” Unfortunately, a lot of entrepreneurs completely disregard this fundamental truth.

That’s why the vast majority of them who are looking to build a successful brand based on their personal presentations, personal appearances, and personal content fail time and time again. It all goes back to the glue, the foundation, the common denominator... credibility and trust.

In this book, I’ve outlined some key steps you need to follow so you can build the level of credibility you need, to take your business to the next level.

This book doesn’t claim to be the definitive be-all end-all guide to building credibility and trust with prospects, customers and clients. However, it does lay out some actionable and workable strategies you can tweak and customize to suit your personal situation.

Let me get this straight, and you can quote me on this.

“If you are not aiming to establish instant credibility and trust with your target clientele, you are settling for cents on the dollar. You are failing to run your business in a manner that will get you and your clients to the level of success you both deserve.”

Now think about that for a moment.

You may have the best product, the best training, the best qualifications, and the best certifications, but unfortunately, in the eyes of your prospects and clients that’s all irrelevant in the absence of credibility and trust.



[1]

# Unleashing Credibility and Trust to Overcome Your Com- petition

THE INTERNET HAS BEEN nothing but short of a miracle when it comes to building personal and corporate brands. It really has made the whole process of taking an idea and turning it into a set of signals that people from all over the world can identify with and can take action on.

I am of course talking about brand building.

Whether you are building a corporate brand or a personal brand, it doesn't matter. The internet has made your job much easier.

Sounds great, right?

On face value, yes. However, like anything else in business, when something like corporate and personal branding become so popular, to the point of becoming mainstream, it naturally creates lots of competing brands.

End result?

It gets harder for people (your prospects), to filter out certain types of information because of information overload.

You only need to go to Twitter to see what I am talking about. Every influential *Twitterer* is retweeting or tweeting seemingly credible information that's targeted towards a niche.

There is nothing wrong with this. But if there are millions of people doing this simultaneously, you can instantly see what you are up against.

We are living in an age of information overload and your target audiences' default response, regardless of your niche, is one of suspicion. Since there are so many choices, it makes more sense (in your prospects eyes), to take a step back and hold back from making a decision.

In other words, instead of being enlightened by this broad array of information, the opposite occurs. They are so overwhelmed by the variety, the selection, and the nuances involved that they hold back on making a judgment.

Confused minds do not make the right decisions.

This is a serious problem because if your prospects, customers and clients are operating from a place of suspicion and confusion, then you as a business owner are up against a challenging deficit.

You are working against deeply engrained hurdles in your prospects minds. It's not your fault, however there is a high cost to this suspicion, and it's called distrust. It's something you can ill afford to ignore, so let's take a closer look.

## THE HIGH COST OF DISTRUST

Consumers of content on the worldwide web and social media, both on desktop and mobile platforms, are in an initial state of distrust. With this, entrepreneurs such as yourself have a lot of extra hoops to jump through just to get to the conversion stage.

For you to convert your prospects and clients, you have to build trust. For you to build trust, you have to overcome their initial skepticism, suspicion and distrust.

Now before I continue, it's worth mentioning that people don't actively set out to prove you wrong. These people don't set out to knock you down, call you out, and otherwise confront and question the information that you bring to the table.

Most of the time, this distrust is manifested in the form of apathy. The practical effect of their attitude is that they just don't care about anything else other than what's in it for them.

If they see so many competing signals, so many competing sources of information, so many claims to branding "truths", their default position is to just seemingly not care.

So why is the high cost of apathy important to you?

### **The high cost of customer apathy**

Since people begin with this default level of not taking action, their minds are initially closed. They have a need for whatever it is that you

are promoting. But you have that extra burden of igniting their passion for solving their need.

It is very easy for online consumers, whether they be end users or business-to-business customers, to compartmentalize this apathy. It is very easy for them to have this default attitude of, *"I'll get to it when I can"*.

The more they conceptualize the solutions to their needs as something that they can resolve in the future, the harder it becomes for you.

Why? Well, the emotional engagement isn't there. The emotional immediacy is simply not present, which makes your job much harder.

You have to come up with a competitive edge because you are not operating with these factors in a vacuum. You are dealing with competitors who had a head start over you. They have been in the game longer. They have taken more shots. They have had more opportunities to solve the customer apathy and distrust problem.

This is a serious issue because many companies who may have developed solid offline brands, go online completely clueless as to this dynamic. As a result, they spend a tremendous amount of time, money and resources, and have very little to show for it. By being clear as to what you are up against, you can develop a framework that will give you a competitive advantage.

Which brings us to...

## RECOGNIZING YOUR COMPETITOR'S BRANDING ADVANTAGE

Another key issue that you need to be mindful of is, since your competitors have a head start on you, they may already have a branding advantage. It might not be much of an advantage. Maybe they are stumbling over the same issues that you are challenged by.

But fact is, they have been in the game longer. They've had more opportunities to resolve the issues of suspicion, distrust, and customer apathy. This is not an advantage to be ignored.

By the sheer fact of being in the market longer than you, they have had more opportunities to create compelling competitive advantages when it comes to branding. Always remember this. By understanding this and being aware of this, you can benefit from their early to rise competitor advantage. I will walk you through the process of doing exactly that in a later chapter.

The main point is, and I know it sounds so obvious but it must be said, you cannot completely dismiss your competition. They are obviously doing somethings right for them to still be in the game.

They might not be doing a tremendously stellar job, and it's great that you can see and recognize that as you can use that to your advantage, but still, any little accomplishment they may have, may give you the foothold that you need to achieve greater levels of success.

## THE SOLUTION? ESTABLISH INSTANT CREDIBILITY AND TRUST

The solution to your prospects and clients suspicion, the high cost of their distrust and apathy, as well as the existing brand advantages of your competitors is to master the art of establishing iCAT.

I know, what in the world does **iCAT** stand for?

It's simply an acronym for...

### **Instant Credibility And Trust**

So from this point on when you see it, you know what it means.

iCAT enables you to break down the natural suspicion and distrust your prospective audience have regarding you and your solutions. The more they use the internet, the more they network with other people, the stronger these tendencies become.

By focusing on establishing iCAT, you can quickly eradicate the common patterns of their distrustful behavior by providing informative, educational information.

Educational information is rarely void of emotion, if ever at all. Arguably, I'd be bold enough to say, ***“There is always an emotionally embedded component to everything in life.”***

People like to believe that we are completely rational and driven purely by logic. However, honestly speaking, we are nothing but creatures of numerous emotions. We actually make lots of impulsive emotional decisions, and then rationalize them with logic and reason thereafter.

To keep things in context, the same applies to your prospects and clients initial resistance to you and your business. When you establish iCAT, you trigger deeply embedded emotional responses.

This leads people to make decisions in your favor at the crucial ready to buy stage, only to rationalize their choices later based on the sound information you provided.

## ESTABLISHING ICAT SAVES A LOT OF TIME

If you don't focus on iCAT you are left playing the online and offline marketing game the traditional way. I am of course talking about repetitive top of mind image and brand-building campaigns. In short, it's the process of repeatedly placing your brand in front of a wide audience, and hoping they will remember you when they have a need for your services.

The problem with this strategy is that it is very hard to measure and, in many cases, it is too little too late. In fact, it is not uncommon for some service providers to create the need for a particular type of product in the mind of a prospect, only to have that prospect buy from another supplier.

In other words, you watered, cultivated, and fertilized the garden only to have somebody else harvest the fruit. Has that ever happened with you and your business, or someone you know? There's something instinctively wrong with that picture, right?

Building iCAT shortens the time it takes from your prospects determining their needs and then looking towards you as the solution to their problems. As the old saying goes, "Time is money." The quicker you can shorten the decision making process, the more profitable it would be for you, and the more value you can bring to your customers.

## ESTABLISHING iCAT REDUCES MARKETING COSTS

As I have mentioned earlier, a long drawn-out repetitive image-building and brand-building campaign can take a lot of time. Since time is money, this also requires investment on your part.

If you are just a one-person operation or you run a small company, this is obviously not the best option. Taking out a billboard ad or running expensive TV ad campaigns is simply not an option because you don't have deep enough pockets to start and sustain such a campaign. Moreover, fine-tuning such a campaign also requires additional investment.

Now don't get me wrong, I am not saying that these campaigns don't produce results. They do. That is why advertising is a global multibillion dollar industry.

However, it does take time. It doesn't happen overnight. Also, it involves a lot of data analysis, fine-tuning, and statistical adjustments. This all amounts to an extended time period and investment.

You might think you are running a small ad campaign. But if you total up the amount of money you spend as well as the opportunity costs, it can turn out to be quite an expensive proposition.

## ESTABLISHING iCAT IS A MORE EFFECTIVE FORM OF BRAND BUILDING

Just like with anything else in life, there are always two ways to do things. You can choose to do things the easy way, or you can choose to do things the hard way.

Interestingly enough, doing things the easy way may seem like a good idea at first. On face value, it may seem obvious to take the easy route involving less money, less time commitment and other benefits that appear to be a slam dunk.

However, if you are going to add up all your actual costs both in terms of time and money, it would have been much easier in hindsight to just take the hit, do things the hard way, and get things right the first time.

Building iCAT can lead to faster results, no doubt. However, it is definitely not easy. It definitely has a learning curve. You need to quickly come to terms with the amount of effort, attention to detail, and strategizing needed to produce the results you need.

## ESTABLISHING iCAT CAN MAKE ANY SMALL OPERATION LOOK LIKE A GIANT OPERATION

My most favorite iCAT benefit is the fact that regardless of how many resources you have, if you use this approach to brand building, you can look much bigger and more powerful than you actually are. This is a tremendous advantage, considering the fact that regardless of the niche you are in, you are bound to come up against better equipped, more experienced, and more determined competitors.

If people perceive you as more powerful, established, and credible, you gain an instant competitive advantage. It is easier to get that contract. It is easier to get your foot in the door. It is easier for your prospects to refer you.

This is why I am excited about helping you to understand the benefits of establishing iCAT for your business because it gives the little guy a fighting chance.

By placing iCAT at the forefront of all your marketing efforts, you are able to turn the often challenging game of online marketing and personal brand marketing into a game even the little guy can play.

It is a very powerful way of leveling the playing field.

The focus then shifts to what actual value you bring to the table for your prospects and clients, instead of how much capital you have, who you know, and other considerations.



[2]

## How Establishing iCAT Takes Your Business to the Next Level

IF YOUR BUSINESS HAS been struggling to get noticed, the solution might be simpler than you realize. The solution is iCAT. By establishing iCAT with your prospects, your business can truly take off. You don't have to spend a huge amount of time, effort and resources to take your business to the next level.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ESTABLISH ICAT?

When you establish iCAT, your prospects trust your brand. You consistently provide them with valid reasons to give you the benefit of the doubt, and yes, between you and me, you deserve that, right?

Anyway, this is a tremendous competitive advantage because your prospects and clients tend to do more business with people they trust. They tend to spend more, they tend to buy more often, and most importantly, they tend to spread the word more when dealing with people who have earned their trust.

The key to earning that level of trust, of course, is credibility. How can they trust you if you demonstrate that you don't know what you are talking about? How can they trust an organization that has (in their eyes), questionable motives, capabilities, and hidden agendas?

They simply can't, right? Nobody with an ethical bone in their body can. It's an impossible ask!

However, when they are dealing with a person or an organization that they find trustworthy, they are more open and it is easier for them to become more emotionally invested in what your company has to offer. The more emotionally invested they are, the higher the likelihood they would want to spread the good word about your business.

All these benefits of iCAT have a tremendous effect on any organization's bottom line. Here are some of them. There are a lot more benefits to establishing iCAT than what follows. However, I'm sure you will agree that these benefits are indeed crucial to the success of any business regardless of their industry.

## ICAT BENEFIT #1: GETS YOU NOTICED!

Ever since the launch of the Apple iPhone, billions of consumers have had so much data at their fingertips. Since your smartphone and your mobile tablet have become instant gateways to the internet, there is just so much information available to consumers.

This has produced a huge sea of competing brands. All these competing brands are sending out their marketing messages that aim to make them stand head and shoulders above other brands.

I am not just talking about competing brands in total. I am talking about a massive amount of brands and options within seemingly tight niches.

Regardless of whether you sell consulting, insurance, or luxury real estate services, there are sure to be many competing providers in your niche, regardless of how seemingly tight or specialized your niche may be.

That is the modern marketing world we live in. There are just a lot of marketing messages out there.

The big tragedy is that consumers interpret this avalanche of marketing messages as noise. The more noise there is in your niche, the harder it is for your particular brand to stand out and get noticed.

However, here's the thing...

If you master the art of establishing iCAT in your niche, you instantly get noticed.

You stand out.

Your message no longer falls between the cracks. Your message no longer disappears into the background noise.

Instead, your distinct value proposition shines through. It is very easy to identify the set of benefits your company has on offer, which can mean the difference between either opening and closing a sale, or simply fading away into the background.

## ICAT BENEFIT #2: INCREASES TRUST, ELIMINATES DISTRUST

Getting your brand noticed is just one part of the iCAT recipe, but on its own is simply not enough. Given enough time and available resources, any brand can get noticed. Your next challenge then is to eliminate distrust, and boost the level of trust.

We spoke about this earlier but let me remind you again. You have to understand and accept the natural levels of suspicion and skepticism that consumers have when faced with a barrage of competing messages. Simply put, they just don't know who to trust.

Think about it.

If there are a huge number of brands mentioning the same thing, talking about the same problem, claiming they care, and sending out the same emotional signals, it is very easy for consumers to think all those messages are somehow, some way alike.

In other words, it is very easy for them to look at your marketing messages and pigeon hole you right alongside companies providing inferior services to yours.

Now how messed up is that?

Within seconds you are dismissed, sent back to square one, and in most cases you won't even know it is happening. All you see are the disappointing results from your expensive page one on Google SEO campaign and are left wondering - why the low response rates?

You have to understand that for you to close a business deal, whether online or offline, you have to get people to *find, trust and choose you*.

**\*Find \*Trust & \*Choose™** is actually a system I developed to help my clients to do just that, to be found online at the critical stage when consumers are ready to buy, to quickly establish trust and to provide prospects with valid reasons to choose them.

Let me break it down step by step for you.

For people to **find you** is the easy part. You simply create useful educational content addressing the biggest problems you already know your prospects and clients have,

Then you publish it across highly respected third party platforms using a combination of your marketing moniker, your name, business name and location.

Mine looks like this.

Authority Marketing Guy, Stewart A. Alexander. Or sometimes like this, Talk Show Host, Stewart Andrew Alexander. A real estate agents could look like this.

Real Estate Specialist, John Smith, Smith Realty, New York, NY

You get the gist, right?

Make sure to repurpose and publish the content in different formats such as video, blog posts, email broadcasts, news releases, social media posts, radio interviews, news rooms, digital magazines, physical and digital books but to name a few. Follow this, and it will be easy for your target clientele to *find you*.

Next step is for them to trust you. For them to **trust you**, they must first believe in you. They must feel that you are the source of valuable information, and that you truly care about their results. For them to believe in you, you must first provide evidence of being an educator, an advocate and trusted advisor for their success.

Then comes the choosing you part.

In short, they must first gain a level of confidence that you know what you are talking about, and that you know how to help them move from point A, *their current situation*, to point B, where they want to be, in other words, *their desired outcome*.

However, to get there, they must feel some level of semblance so they can justifiably filter out competing solutions, refer to you as the expert and **choose you**, instead of your competitors.

The downside of not doing this is you will end up converting prospects into sales in a haphazard manner. You would be better off rolling a dice, crossing your fingers, and hoping for the best.

The results would be the same. You are just flying by the seat of your pants and wishing and hoping for your desired plan to pan out sooner rather than later. *And that my friend is no way to run a business.*

That is no way to take your business to the next level. The only realistic option you have is to figure out how to establish iCAT and win your prospects and clients over from the very first moment they come into contact with your business.

Customers are in desperate need of a certain signal, a certain piece of information, or a certain framework or device they can use time and time again to get predictable results.

In other words, they are looking for decision-making tools or shorthand signals that they can place their confidence in to predictably get adequate results time and time again.

You have to understand that that's the point you need to reach for your prospect to take the straight line path of least resistance and buy from you. This is why it is really important to master the art of building iCAT.

When I'm at networking meetings or public speaking events I always raise an eyebrow or two when I say what I'm about to share with you. Some agree, some don't, but what it does do is to create interesting conversations.

"People are in a hurry to trust you. They are waiting for you to reach that one point where everything you said before, all lines up and triggers trust."

Mastering the art of establishing iCAT enables you to reach that point time and time again. Moreover, it enables you to reach that point with a predictable level of accuracy, the benefit being, you do just enough to achieve the desired outcome. This can make your business leaner, faster, nimbler, and more efficient.

All said and done, this can lead to a positive effect on your bottom line. The lower your costs, the higher your profit margins.

## **BUILDING iCAT EASES THE CONVERSION PROCESS**

The whole process of opening and closing sales really boils down to conversion. A prospect starts out as being suspicious and resistant to you and your business. They don't know you from Adam and they have question after question, which makes you feel like you are running the gauntlet.

If you know how to establish iCAT, you leapfrog the second guessing of your expertise, the doubts about your products, the questioning of your fees, and land in the warm and fuzzy area of instant trust.

Establishing iCAT is like having a secret code to moving prospects through the costly know, like and trust process all in one fail swoop, leaving your competitors behind, while you focus on higher return investment activities.

You have to remember that every stage you go through calls for an investment of time, effort, and resources.

By skipping as many of these stages as possible, you decrease your organization's overall costs and increase your bottom line profits.

Lowering costs is something which happens by default when you master the art of establishing iCAT. As it's such an important point, let's break that down and take a closer look.

## **iCAT BENEFIT #3: LOWERING YOUR COSTS**

When you establish iCAT you can lower your costs as you become the hunted vs the hunter. In other words, your prospects and clients actively seek you out as opposed to you using time, effort and valuable resources to seek them out.

Additionally, as more and more people seek you out, your costs are automatically reduced as the need for customer acquisition marketing becomes less and your close rates become higher.

Those are just a few examples of how mastering the skill set of iCAT can lower your costs. Reducing those costs is crucial for maintaining and pursuing a healthy profit margin. There is no disagreement here.

However, there is also another type of cost I'd like to point the spotlight on. As entrepreneurs, we know this type of cost is there, yet it still remains as one of the most often overlooked, but most resource draining costs out there.

What I'm eluding to are of course opportunity costs.

You see, the more time you take to help a prospect to invest in your products and or services, the more time you take away from helping other prospects to do the same. In other words, your opportunity costs can really eat into your bottom line because you are spending too much time generating one sale when more efficient closing processes could have enabled you to close more sales within the same period of time.

Does that make sense?

Instead of spending thousands upon thousands of dollars acquiring just one prospect, why not spend the same amount securing five or even ten prospects and generating more profits that way?

This, in my mind, is actually the biggest benefit of mastering the art of iCAT. It enables your company to zero in and fully take advantage of as many different opportunities as possible. This is how you truly take your business to the next level.

A \$10,000 deal is a great thing. But twenty \$10,000 deals are definitely much better. It is all about scale. And mastering the art of iCAT can enable you to lower your opportunity costs to such an extent that you can build a truly large-scale business.

## ICAT BENEFIT #4: ESTABLISHING A SOLID BRAND FASTER

One of the most frequently asked questions I hear when consulting new clients on the topic of positioning themselves as credible, trustworthy professionals within their industry is, “How do I create a solid brand quickly?”

Being the type of person I am, I like to dig deeper before answering such questions, so I’ll say, “Why do you want to establish a solid brand quickly?” Don’t you just love people who answer a question with a question, I digress.

Anyway, I get to hear many types of answers, each one providing insight into the minds of my clients and what they think is important.

But there’s the thing.

I’m more interested in what’s going on in the minds of the customers of my clients, and so should you.

And why?

Well, when you understand the thoughts, questions, fears of your customers, then you’ll know exactly how to establish a solid brand quickly.

I have always compared solid brands to the actors, producers and directors of movies. They do the work once and continue to benefit from them for years thereafter. The same goes for you. You will also benefit from your branding efforts long after you have invested dollars in establishing your brand.

You can look at it this way. Building a solid brand is like having a store full of consumer goodwill filled to the brim with shelves of consumer credibility and trust.

By focusing on mastering the art and process of building iCAT, you can develop solid brands faster.

You can get to the stage where your brand can run on auto-pilot without you having to spend another dime or dollar on your marketing campaigns.

This is a tremendous benefit, especially if the time ever comes when you have the luxury of being able to sell your business.

Instead of selling it for just one million dollars, you can probably sell your business for much more because of that solid framework you established which makes your products and services credible with your target audiences from the get-go.

Now imagine that for a moment. Wouldn't that be great? Well there are no guarantees, but you certainly increase your chances when you master the art of establishing iCAT.

Let's continue...

[3]

## Breaking Down the Building Blocks of Credibility and Trust

I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED in Chapter 2 how iCAT can take your business to the next level. I have also outlined in broad strokes how the power of iCAT can help you overcome your competition. In this chapter, we are going to focus on a working definition of iCAT.

We have to get a clear idea of all the building blocks that go into establishing iCAT. Otherwise, it would be very easy to try to approach the subject matter in general terms. This really doesn't go far enough in unlocking the full range of benefits iCAT can bring to the table.

So what are the building blocks of iCAT?

## PROPER POSITIONING

For you to become credible with somebody, you have to put yourself in a position where they can easily understand that you know what you are talking about. In other words, credibility has a strong educational component. You have to give them something that they either don't know yet, or they have an unclear or incomplete understanding of.

This accomplishes two things. First, it zeroes them into the fact that you know the right information they are looking for. You are not some random person who appeared out of nowhere and takes random guesses as to what is important and meaningful to their current situation.

Instead, you give them solid information within a specific and defined category of knowledge that they are interested in. This enables you to quickly and instantly stand apart from the competition.

The second reason why information helps pave the way for credibility is that it informs them in no uncertain terms that you know what you are talking about. For you to even talk about certain topics means that you know the context, you know the framework, as well as the sequence of that information.

Again, you are not some random person blasting out random topics they may or may not be interested in. There is a rhyme and reason to what you say and how you say it.

At the very least, proper positioning enables you to separate yourself from the hucksters, slick salesmen, and outright fraudsters out there. Slick salesmen, fraudsters, and hucksters all share a common trait.

They know how to use certain words to gloss over and cover for the fact that they don't really know what they are talking about. They lure their victims in and let another factor, their personal appeal and charm, get the best of them.

Compare this with the educator. When you properly position the information that you have, you are taking the role of an educator and trustworthy advisor. An educator steps the prospect through key issues that are relevant to their prospect's decision making process.

It's similar to how most people respond favorably to a teacher, and not assume that the teacher is out to mislead them or harm them in any way. Approaching prospects from the perspective of an educator and trustworthy advisor enables your message to shine through and be received the way you would want it to be received.

However, there is a big danger you need to be aware of when looking to take on the position of an educator. The big danger lies in being perceived as an information overload pest, instead of a welcomed educator and advocate guest. Two totally different things. But they do share a lot in common, and this is where the confusion comes in.

Simply dumping your prospects and clients with all sorts of relevant information is not enough. They can get this anywhere. They can get this by going to Wikipedia. They can perform keyword searches on Google. In fact, they can go to Twitter, follow a specific hashtag, and get a fire hydrant full of information.

This is what I call an *information overload pest*.

You're providing nothing short of an information dump. It's not one of your credibility building blocks. Sure, it makes you look more credible than a huckster or outright fraud. But if you stay at this level, it doesn't really convince your prospect to go with you as opposed to somebody who works as a concerned educator and advocate for their clients success.

The proper positioning to establish iCAT is to not just have the right information, but also to drip-feed that information. Organize that information in such a way that your prospects can understand it and, most importantly, take action on it.

## EMBODYING THE ESSENCE OF SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE

It is not enough for you to simply claim that you are a subject matter expert. You have to take the extra step. As the old saying goes, "Don't just tell me. Show me."

In essence, you have to demonstrate that you understand the building blocks of your clients' business. You understand the body of facts within the subject matter, and your subject matter passion must always shine through in everything you do.

Do I have to know everything? No, but you should know enough to be able to embody the essence of the subject matter. The practical manifestation of this principle is your ability to produce case studies. Case studies really separate the wheat from the chaff.

When you only have a rough or academic understanding of a particular subject matter, you tend to rely on using situational keywords, or trying to hide behind the most recent buzzwords. But when you truly embody the essence of subject matter expertise, you can break down a fact pattern, identify a key principle, and lay out how these principles produce specific outcomes.

Just as importantly, a true subject matter expert can come up with different alternative scenarios and apply those principles to come up with different outcomes.

Before we move on, remember this. You don't have to know everything, but with mastery comes a sense of predictability and a sense of control which arises from the embodying and showing of subject matter expertise.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AN EXISTING PERSONAL BRAND?

We just finished talking about the first two credibility building blocks, now let's take a look at the third one, personal branding. You are able to transfer some of your expertise through your clients' brand.

As I said before, you can do this through subject matter case studies. However, another powerful credibility building block that you can help your clients with is a well thought out personal branding campaign.

In essence, you are lending your personal expertise to generate instant credibility and trust (iCAT), for your client's brand. What makes this work is the fundamental building block of personal branding.

It all begins with personal branding. You need to enter business relationships with the right credentials and the right references. There are exceptions, but in most cases you don't just come out of nowhere and become an overnight success. There is a credible and vetted channel that you go through.

This is why it is extremely crucial to focus on personal branding, for yourself and your clients. Without personal branding, it is very hard to get the level of credibility you need to make things happen.

This doesn't necessarily mean it is not going to happen. What it does mean is that you stretch your timeline further into the future. You

might not have enough money, and resources to go the long haul and crash and burn along the way.

By building a credible personal brand, you make yourself stand out from the crowd, attract more prospects and clients and ultimately create scenarios where you can make more money to build your business.

## CONNECTING YOUR EXPERTISE WITH MEDIA AWARENESS FOR YOUR BRAND

It would be very easy for you to connect your positioning, your subject matter expertise, and your personal brand with media awareness campaigns.

Besides the ease of extending your subject matter expertise and the credibility of the channels you are associated with to your brand, there are serious and readily identifiable benefits for personal brand extension.

First is media attention. If you are already a subject matter expert within a particular narrow field of knowledge, it is much easier for you to get the media attention to make your brand stand out from the competition.

This leads to the second benefit, which is getting niche interviews. Let's face it. If you just wanted to get interviews this isn't that difficult. Thanks to the almost infinite number of content channels available online and offline, getting interviews is not the problem.

The big challenge is getting interviewed by credible channels in your niche. The whole point of getting interviewed is that the moment a credible media outlet in your niche chooses you to be interviewed, they lend their credibility to you. If they deem you to be important enough to talk to, this is a very important signal that they are sending out to the target market you are trying to reach.

Finally, when you have already established a personal brand within a particular niche category, it is easier for you to get speaking engagements. Again, just like with interviews, there is a specific hierarchy involved in the events and organizations that feature speakers.

Ideally, you should look to get invited to events that are highly trusted in your industry. For example, if you are in the Real Estate industry, it would be a major coup to get invited to the biggest Real Estate convention in your country.

## BRANDING VERSUS BRAGGING

It is very tempting to create self-indulging marketing campaigns which are tantamount to nothing more than awkwardly placed bragging events.

Just laying out your past accomplishments and allowing your record to speak for itself may seem like the right thing to do as part of establishing an authoritative position in the marketplace, but is that really the case?

The reality is that bragging or puffery even, is really all about distraction. Instead of focusing on positioning yourself as a helpful educator and trustworthy advisor for your clients success, you're more consumed with trying to overcome the objections of your prospect with a smoke screen of impressive-sounding credentials that are, in the end, often irrelevant.

Now don't get me wrong, there is a time, place and manner in which to share your credentials. For example, it is not bragging when you outline past accomplishments and industry awards which are relevant to the industry your prospects and clients are in.

However, it is important that you fully understand this because maybe you're thinking that the whole personal branding and credibility positioning process is really all about playing up your credentials. It isn't. It is more targeted than that.

Establishing iCAT and building a personal brand that is trustworthy in the eyes of your prospects and clients has to be targeted. It has to speak to a specific channel. It has to convey a certain range of information that is well defined and focused. Otherwise, it is very easy to miss your objectives.

In the end, personal branding is simply a tool. It is a tool for getting more exposure so you can reach the prospects that need your help.

[4]

## The Dangers of Competing Without Credibility and Trust

THERE USED TO BE an American Express commercial that was very famous between the 1970s to the 1980s. The tag line of the advertising campaign was "American Express: Don't Leave Home without It".

The same tag line applies to your efforts in building instant credibility and trust (iCAT), with prospects and clients. You shouldn't try to compete both online and offline without first having it in place. To keep things in context with that famous American Express ad, "You shouldn't build your business without establishing iCAT." Otherwise, it would be very easy to waste a lot of time, effort, and resources trying to champion your brand.

Here are just some of the most common dangers that you run the risk of encountering if you don't use iCAT to gain a competitive advantage.

## **FALLING BETWEEN THE CRACKS**

It is very easy for your message to fall between the cracks if you don't give your target audience compelling enough reasons to differentiate it from the rest of the herd.

You have to understand that we are in the digital mobile age. An ever increasing number of your competitors are making the transition from offline to online, resulting in a reduced gap between what was once two separate worlds.

What this means is that the capacity to create huge amounts of online content has increased and continues to increase exponentially, and spills over into the offline world creating an overwhelming barrage of information.

Simply put, and much to the detriment of your prospects and clients, there is too much information out there. There are too many businesses talking the same game, throwing out what seems to be the same message.

If you fail to focus on building iCAT, your message will fall between the cracks and will get absorbed into the abyss of background noise that emanates from online and offline sources. Simply put, your message gets drowned out by the capacity of modern media's content production machine.

How much content is produced every single day? Without even counting offline sources of marketing content, we are talking about two million new pieces of online content being published daily. And the number is growing exponentially. That is how much competition you are up against.

You can try to duck and weave this issue by simply saying, "Well, a lot of that content is not in my niche." That may be technically true.

But even if you filter based on a niche, there is still a lot of content being generated. There are still a lot of materials that you need to overcome, in terms of making your brand or your client's brand stand out.

## **UNDIFFERENTIATED MEDIA PRESENCE IS NO PRESENCE AT ALL**

You might think, since you are producing all this content, making all this contact, and reaching out with seemingly niche-relevant material, that you have a solid media presence.

The problem with this thinking is that, while it is true that you do have a media presence, it is undifferentiated. The way content is being consumed currently means an undifferentiated media presence is no presence at all. You simply can't stand out if you don't get picked out.

For example, it is like being a blue widget in a sea of blue widgets. You may be the best blue widget of the bunch. You might have amazing engineering. You may be the product of a long, complicated, and expensive product evolutionary process. But it doesn't really matter.

Why? On the face of things, your product, your concept, or your service is just like everybody else's. It is hard for you to stand out when you can't give people an immediate reason to pick you out.

## SHALLOW INDUSTRY REACH

By simply playing the game without the power of establishing iCAT in your industry, your reach will be, by definition, shallow. It has to be. You would be treated just like everybody else. You would be treated just like everybody who goes through the front door.

Everybody knows that, for you to really get anywhere in any industry, people have to invite you through the back door. In other words, you have to be referred by somebody credible to get in. You have to already have your own building blocks of credibility to get in.

Longer trust development cycles can get quite expensive. As the old saying goes, "Time is money." And as I have mentioned earlier, you can establish iCAT doing things the regular way. But it will just take time.

The big tragedy is that most enterprises don't have the resources to do things this way. The longer it takes, the more money you burn. Why is this? You could have devoted that time doing something else that would have put money on the table. This is the classical concept of opportunity costs.

The longer it takes for trust to develop, the more money it will cost you. This is why it is extremely important to be clear to both your obvious and conscious costs, and your invisible costs like opportunity costs. These invisible costs are just as real as your conscious costs. In fact, in the big scheme of things, you lose more money with opportunity costs.

## LESS CREDIBILITY LEADS TO SMALLER DEALS

If you don't unlock the power of iCAT with your prospects and clients, you are going to just have to settle for smaller deals. This may not be

all that bad, but it really cheats you of the scale and volume, as well as profitability, that your company deserves.

Unfortunately, you would just have to resign yourself to the fact that without the ability to build instant credibility and trust, you really can't pick and choose. You just have to settle for small potatoes and hope that they scale up some way, somehow into something bigger.

### **LESS QUALIFIED OR LESS COMPETENT COMPETITORS OVERTAKE YOU**

This is the most frustrating disadvantage of competing without having built iCAT with your prospects and clients. You might see your business overtaken by competitors that you know for a fact are far less competent and less qualified. They just seem to have that magical element that enables them to get bigger and more lucrative contracts than you.

This is extremely frustrating because you know deep down that you could do a better job. You know deep down that you can provide better value. Unfortunately, prospects flock to them instead of you. It is like being the Grade-A student in the class working for somebody who barely graduated. It is really frustrating.

### **YOU WOULD BE RELEGATED TO LESS LUCRATIVE MARKET SEGMENTS**

Any market is composed of many different segments. We are talking about low-end, mid-end, and of course, high-end. If you do not unleash the power of iCAT in your marketing efforts, nine times out of ten, you would be relegated to less lucrative market segments. The more competitive your space, the less profitable the segment of the market you will end up in.

This is a cruel irony of competing without the power of establishing iCAT with your prospects and clients. You can in fact deliver better

value. You may have more experience. You may provide an overall better product. But at the end of the day, all that doesn't matter. At the end of the day, you just end up being forced to make do with less profitable segments of your target market and that totally sucks!

## YOU RUN THE RISK OF BEING LUMPED WITH LESS TRUSTWORTHY BRANDS

To add insult to injury, despite all the problems outlined above, if you market without the power of iCAT, you run the very real risk of being automatically lumped or categorized with less trustworthy brands. This is a serious issue because it is going to weigh down your brand's ability to become credible or to become a market leader.

You have to remember that human beings from all four corners of the globe subscribe to the old saying, "Birds of the same feather flock together." In other words, you are guilty by association. Since you cannot unlock the power of instant credibility and trust to make your brand stand out, you are automatically thrown in with known low-value brands. These other brands corrode your brand and make it that much harder to make your brand rise above.

Pay close attention to the dangers we just spoke about. These are the key dangers many entrepreneurs overlook and, as a result, suffer from. They put themselves in a very frustrating situation where their business is not going where they need it to go, and they are vainly just going around in circles trying to figure out why. It all boils down to a lack of the ability to establish iCAT with their prospects and clients.

Make no mistake about it. iCAT is a key tool you have to develop to get ahead in the modern marketing rat race. Without this tool, you will be left behind. Considering how fast global marketing is evolving, you can bet that you will be left far, far behind.

How do I know this?

Because at the time of writing this book for you, I've been helping entrepreneurs just like you improve their businesses for 10 years and there are some common barriers I hear all the time that stop them from achieving their desired outcomes. With that said, let's close this chapter out and move on to the next where we'll discuss these points in more detail.



[5]

## Common Barriers to Establishing Instant Credibility and Trust

I'VE ALREADY COVERED why establishing instant credibility and trust (iCAT), with your prospects and clients is important. However, understanding its importance and actually implementing it are two totally different things.

Time and time again, people who try to make iCAT work for them have a tough time. They simply can't get out of the gate. The reason for this is that they constantly run into common barriers that prevent them from effectively establishing iCAT.

Keep in mind that we're not talking about the actual implementation steps of iCAT just yet. We're not talking about the actual technical steps.

In this chapter, I'm going to talk primarily about misconceptions. These are things that you think of and unconsciously subscribe to which end up undermining your success. It is my hope that by laying out this information, you can be clear as to what they are and most importantly, learn how to avoid them.

You have to understand that nine times out of ten, the things that hold you back and prevent you from achieving the success you're capable of achieving are completely internal. That's right—they are completely mental.

They're part of your attitude and your mindset, an inside job! At the end of the day, even if you have all the resources in the world, establishing iCAT is made all the more difficult because you subscribe to these mindsets on an unconscious basis.

By laying them out and making them clear in your mind, you can then ask yourself key questions as to whether you actually believe these things. If you do, you owe it to yourself to think otherwise. You owe it to yourself to think in such a way that you overcome the negative effects of these mindsets.

## SELF-DOUBT AND SELF-SABOTAGE

One of the most crucial aspects of success in any kind of project is the ability to believe in the project. I know this might seem pretty straightforward and even seem like common sense.

However, if you are unclear as to this fundamental element, nothing is possible. You would be surprised as to how many otherwise qualified and able people fail time and time again because they simply doubt their own project.

To put it in as simple terms as possible, if you think that something is impossible, it will become impossible. It doesn't matter how much money you have or how skilled you are. If you allow yourself to doubt your project, that project becomes impossible. If you think that it's not doable, it will become impossible to do.

Why?

Your mind will find a way to hold you back.

Even if you are physically capable of doing it, and you have all the right financial resources to take care of a project, if your mind stands in the way, and you assume that something is not doable, it's going to be impossible.

This is the worst form of self-sabotage because it is all self-inflicted. You only need to dig deep, realize what you're doing, and do a 180. Believe that it is possible.

## OVERESTIMATING YOUR COMPETITION

Another common way we hold ourselves back from achieving anything worthy of doing is our overestimation of the competition. Make no mistake about it, you need to have a realistic view of your competition. You can't just go into any kind of project and just expect it to be a walk in the park. I'm not saying that.

What I am saying is that you don't want to blow up your competition's capabilities to such a degree that it robs you of your resolve to push forward. You don't want to compete out of fear.

If you imagine giants when none exist, you're just operating out of fear, and you can't do what you need to do to get ahead. It's one thing to get a realistic estimation of your competition. It's another to completely blow up your competition's capabilities and resources.

You're not doing yourself any favors by overestimating your competition. Look at your competition with a realistic mindset. Don't imagine things that aren't there.

## FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

One of the most common objections you will encounter in your efforts to build a personal brand and establishing instant credibility through your brand is the objection that what you're doing hasn't been done before. Of course, it's been done before by other people, but it hasn't been done by you. You will hear this all the time.

The problem with this is that this fear focuses your attention in the wrong place. Instead of looking at yourself, look at the other people that have successfully pulled this off. The antidote to fear of the unknown as far as establishing instant credibility and trust through personal branding is concerned, is simple: If they can do it, you can do it too.

Just keep repeating that to yourself and start taking actionable steps (that you have 100% control over), that will move you closer to your goal.

Just focus on the fact that you are equipped with the same hardware as those people. They're not more physically gifted than you. They don't have any supernatural powers.

The only thing that they have that you don't is that they decided to focus, take action and learn as much as possible about personal branding and establishing instant credibility and trust with their prospects and clients. That's the only advantage they have over you.

The good news is this advantage can easily be reverse engineered. You can easily get that advantage simply by devoting the right amount of time, effort, and energy.

### **MISUNDERSTANDING PERSONAL BRANDING AS UNNECESSARILY DIFFICULT, COSTLY, OR TIME-INTENSIVE**

This mindset is actually related to the self-doubt mindset we just finished talking about. While the self-doubt self-objection is more absolute, the damage of a less absolute personal objection is just as bad.

Let me explain...

If you think that establishing instant credibility is too hard, will take too much time, or cost too much money, you are misunderstanding the whole project. You have to understand that for you to grow, you have to put in the effort. It will take some pain, sacrifice, and time.

Moreover, no growth is possible without any kind of resource allocation. We're talking of course about money.

While the amount involved may not be all that much, and you can compensate for actual capital by investing your time, there will be some sort of value that you are supposed to give up to achieve this objective. You shouldn't shy away from this.

Understanding how to create trust with prospects when they come into contact with your business for the first time is a worthwhile task because it opens the way to greater opportunities in the future. It opens the way for better marketing effectiveness for both yourself and your client.

Think of it this way: It's like going back to school. When you're at school, you're actually paying a high price because the time you invested sitting in that classroom could have been spent doing something else that probably could have put more money in your pocket. Regardless, it was decided for you that school was more important and later on, you were able to reap a return on that time investment, a good example, being able to read this book.

This is the way you should look at the inconveniences and difficulties that arise as you try to figure out how to establish instant credibility and trust (iCAT) with your prospects and clients.

While I try to make things as clear as possible in this book, your primary challenger will be the fact that there is no cookie-cutter solution.

No one size fits all. Nobody has this magic pill that you place on your tongue, and things start to happen. It doesn't work that way.

I give you a framework to either piece everything together on your own based on your particular set of circumstances and your reality.

By looking at the whole process as fun and a great puzzle to solve, you can have the curious and adventurous mindset needed to overcome temporary hassles that involve time, costs, and any inconveniences that may come up, or you can hire the services of a professional who will save you time and money and help get you there much faster.

## PROCRASTINATION

If somebody told you how to become a millionaire, you're not going to be a millionaire unless you decide to act on that information. Simply waiting another day is not going to make those millions come to you sooner. You are just kicking the can down the road and postponing your enjoyment of the rewards you could have coming your way.

This is exactly what's happening if you are procrastinating in your efforts to build credibility. Simply understanding how to build instant credibility and trust is not going to do you much good. You have to actually put it into practice.

You have to contact people and learn to understand what makes them tick, what keeps them awake at night, their fears, their hopes and their dreams.

You have to allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them. In other words, you have to go through the process. This all involves getting out there and trying.

Procrastination simply just eats up your time. The more time you spend procrastinating, the longer it will take for you to benefit from the power of being able to establish iCAT.

## SHINY OBJECT SYNDROME

The Shiny Object Syndrome is actually pretty straightforward. This is a mindset where you are always looking for the biggest and best opportunity.

You might buy a business related book that spells out how to carry out some specific marketing strategies and halfway through, another book gets launched, and you drop everything trying to pursue that. Halfway through that book, you drop everything again because something “better” came along.

The Shiny Object Syndrome is very common because it caters to the very pronounced human need to stick with something that is a sure thing. For a business owner like you, the problem with this mindset is that nothing is a sure thing unless you've given your all.

Somebody can give you a surefire formula to getting more prospects and clients, however, if you are not disciplined enough to stick through the process needed to achieve the objectives you're capable of, nothing is going to happen.

The solution to Shiny Object Syndrome is simple: Stick to one thing at a time, nail it, devote as much effort, time, and resources on it, master it, and if it still doesn't produce the results that you feel it should produce, then move on to the next project.

This should be your standard. You should only drop something if you have given your all. If you haven't, keep at it.

Don't let yourself be distracted by the next big thing that comes along. Otherwise, you're always going to be chasing after new ideas and failing to achieve anything of value.

Sadly, you won't be alone when you do this. This is probably one of the biggest reasons why most would-be entrepreneurs who try to build a business fail time and time again. They just can't focus.

[6]

## Five Common Misconceptions about Building Instant Credi- bility and Trust

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER (5), we talked about what you're thinking, your attitude and the mindsets that trip you up and prevent you from building instant credibility and trust. In this chapter, we will focus more on common misconceptions, workarounds and realistic solutions.

### **MISCONCEPTION #1: ESTABLISHING INSTANT CREDIBILITY THROUGH PERSONAL BRANDING COSTS TOO MUCH**

Let me get this out of the way right now: If you are going to undertake the project of establishing instant credibility through personal branding, there will be costs involved. They're not just free. There's no magic here. It will cost you something. However, you have a lot of choice as to how much it would cost you.

The reason why any kind of branding and marketing cost money is because it's going to take time. Time after all is money.

If you were to take the time that you devote to doing free marketing methods or personal branding and devote it to something else like a job or a freelance project, you probably would have turned that time into income. In other words, you could have devoted it to other activities that would have produced revenue.

The good news is by devoting the right amount of time into building personal credibility, you are building up your rewards for the future.

The rewards right now might be few and far between, but you are really just investing in your future because the better you get at it, the greater your return on effort and ultimately, the greater your return on investment.

One key reality behind the misconception that building personal credibility can be expensive is the fact that the building blocks for doing this are free. Social media platforms are free.

Email is free. The most powerful blogging software on the planet, WordPress, is free. Moreover, even if you have to pay for hosting, a domain name, or certain types of content, their costs are very manageable.

So don't let the misconception that building your personal credibility is an expensive trip. Don't let it give you yet another reason to procrastinate.

Instead, you have to understand that the biggest asset that you would have to invest in this project is your time.

Your time is your most precious asset. It's a very expensive commodity. However, learning how to quickly build personal credibility is a skill worth your time investment.

Finally, it is possible to reduce your costs with the right credibility building strategy. If you apply the right strategy which we will talk about in the steps mentioned in another chapter, you can go about this whole project with as little costs as possible.

## **MISCONCEPTION #2: YOU WON'T RECOUP YOUR BRANDING COSTS**

A very common misconception repeated by people who are just completely unclear as to the value of personal branding involves getting your money back. It is true that building a personal brand takes time. Since time is money, you will have to invest a lot of money in the form of time.

The problem is that many people misunderstand personal branding because they see it as merely a means to an end. If we look at it that way, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we've wasted all this time, effort, and resources building a solid brand only to achieve this level of results, which may not be enough to cover all our direct and opportunity costs.

The problem with this shortsighted way of assessing the power of personal branding is that it doesn't look at personal branding the right way. Personal branding is all about building an asset.

Your personal brand, once it is fully developed, continues to produce benefits long after you've stopped devoting resources and time to personal branding. It keeps opening doors regardless of where you go.

Just like an asset, it continues to produce income long after you have stopped working for that income. That's why it's an asset instead of a job. People who don't understand how assets work are quick to come up with this misconception. In fact, your brand continues to generate results long after you've stopped spending money and time on it.

Best of all, your personal credibility benefits are scalable. Meaning, once you've established a base brand, it doesn't take all that much effort to scale up that brand and to have it open all types of doors and help you get into other niches and industries. Thanks to inter-industry social networks.

To sum up this misconception, I have to point out the fact that when you are building personal credibility, it is a sunk cost investment. In other words, I can't pull back on the amount of time I'm going to invest in it. Either I develop it as a full asset, or it's not going to work.

This is why so many people have such a misunderstanding of its costs because they don't stick with it long enough to develop it into an asset. As a result, they have this badly functioning brand that ultimately falls apart.

They only have themselves to blame. They can't point to people who have successfully built a brand or who are advocating brand building and accuse these people of wasting their time.

If you were to build a solid brand asset, it will continue to produce results, and it will continue to be scalable long into the future. Your focus shouldn't be on recouping your cost but completely building a solid brand.

### MISCONCEPTION #3: YOU DON'T HAVE THE TALENT, ABILITY, OR SKILL TO ESTABLISH INSTANT CREDIBILITY THROUGH A PERSONAL BRAND

This is probably the most depressing objection to personal branding. People who use this argument or who have this misconception point to successful brands like Martha Stewart, Rachel Ray, Oprah Winfrey, Tony Robbins, and others and dwell on their own lack of talent, ability, or skill. What these self-critics are saying is that they're obviously not a Martha Stewart so why even try?

Well, this totally ignores the fact that before Martha Stewart became a household name, nobody heard of Martha Stewart. Before Oprah Winfrey broke into the scene in a big way, nobody heard of her.

You have to understand that successful brands come from somewhere. They are built. They are not results of random accidents nor are they passed down from heaven. It takes effort to build a successful personal brand.

If you can wrap your mind around this fact, then you can absorb the second fact which is successful personal branding is learned behavior.

Do you think Martha Stewart came to the idea of becoming one of the most recognized personal brands in America with a blueprint? No, she didn't. She may have had a framework like this book but the actual steps and the actual hits and misses that she had to go through were completely her own.

She had her own sets of challenges and circumstances, and these played a role in how she went about building a successful personal brand. Throughout it all, her effort at building herself into a powerhouse brand is based on personal effort and attitude. It's learned behavior.

You have to always keep coming back to the fact that if they can do it, you can do it too. You are not any dumber or less able than any of

these powerful brands. All you need is the time and the will to make it happen.

Believing that you can establish a powerful personal brand is the first step to making progress. If you don't allow yourself to believe that you can achieve what they can achieve, then nothing is possible.

Nothing is impossible if you break it down into enough smaller parts. These are called sub goals.

Just because there is a big gulf of difference between you and Martha Stewart now doesn't necessarily mean that you can kiss your dreams of building a big personal brand good-bye.

Just break down those objectives into small enough sub goals and stick to those sub goals on a day-to-day basis, and you will eventually get there.

Don't rob yourself of the future success you're capable of by simply assuming that since your model brands are so talented and skilled that there's no way for you to reach their level. Don't cheat yourself of your gift. You have a gift, remain true to it and honor it.

#### **MISCONCEPTION #4: YOUR SITUATION IS DIFFERENT THAT ESTABLISHING INSTANT CREDIBILITY WON'T BENEFIT YOUR BUSINESS**

This objection comes from people who think that all businesses are so unique that they can't benefit from consultants. As you can already tell by reading that sentence, it is complete ridiculous. It doesn't make any sense. If it did, business consultants like myself would not exist.

Still, business consultants rake in millions and millions of dollars every single year because of the huge need for their services. Their services mean a lot, and their services have a practical impact.

The reality is that all businesses face the same general challenges. It's all about crafting unique solutions based on a general framework. By using your personal brand to establish instant

credibility for either your business or a client's business, you create a bridge out of this general framework. You make a connection between the general and the specific realities of your particular business or your client's business.

Successful personalized brand building is all about constant experimentation. Even if there are a lot of differences between your particular situation and the situation of the people that you are trying to reach out to, by constantly experimenting, moving things around, making small changes, and paying attention to results, you can come up with something that works.

Make no mistake about it, business consulting is never going to go away. It's a multibillion-dollar industry and there's a huge demand for it because despite the seeming differences between businesses, there are enough similarities that consultants can focus on to deliver solid value to the people that they're trying to help.

## **MISCONCEPTION #5: BRAND CREDIBILITY BUILDING YIELDS A VERY LOW RETURN ON EFFORT**

The funny thing about credibility building is that its results fall into two categories. You have to be fully aware of these categories for you to fully grasp the value of brand credibility building.

Otherwise, it would be very tempting for you to believe the critics of brand-based credibility building and just allow yourself to get intimidated by its long time frames, its seemingly uncertain results, and its high opportunity costs as well as its direct costs.

The good news is brand credibility actually yields a lot of unseen results. First, if you establish a solid brand, your prospects may not buy from you, but they can become your raving fans.

That's right—they can actually plug you into their professional social network. They may not have an immediate need of whatever it is

that you're offering, but since you bring to the table such a solid brand, they don't want you to go to waste.

They would look for people that have a need for whatever it is you're provide and connect you with those people. At the very least, they can put you on their contact list or LinkedIn network and connect with you if somebody in their network has need of whatever you are offering. That's how powerful a solid brand is.

When you establish a high level of credibility, people are motivated and pushed to voluntarily connect you with people they know. Why? They look good because some of your solid branding and solid credibility rubs off on them.

Imagine if you were a best-selling author who had been published in national media on multiple occasions. An event organizer is on the lookout for a speaker on a specific subject matter. She finds your competitor's website which talks about their products and services and credentials, you know the usual stuff you find on corporate websites.

Then she comes across you. You have published articles, blog posts, news releases on highly respected news media sites and to top it all off, you wrote the subject matter book.

Who do you think she is most likely to choose? The answer is obvious right? And why? Well, simply because you'll make her look good in the eyes of her friends, colleagues, her boss even. She will feel that her professional stature will increase by letting her network get connected to a solid resource like you. That's how powerful brand credibility is.

Another reality that the misconception of the supposed low return on effort of brand credibility totally misses is scalability. When you have established solid credibility, it doesn't take much for you to scale up.

It doesn't take much for you to try new revenue opportunities, new add-ons, and new services. Why? You already opened your door with your credibility. It doesn't take extra effort to take the next step.

Finally, even if brand credibility may have a low visible return on effort currently, your solid credibility increases in value over time.

Unless you do something that totally calls your credibility into question, your credibility continues to increase the more deals you do, the more your brand is put out there, and the more people talk about your brand. It takes on a life of its own and it grows and grows over time. Eventually, it takes less and less effort on your part to open deals and close them.

Keep these factors in mind when looking at the question of return on effort. Sure, in the very beginning, return on effort would be low. Your brand is fairly new. You haven't scaled up yet. You haven't established your own tribe of followers. But eventually, once all these assets come into play, you would quickly realize that your decision to build a credible brand is one of the best decisions you ever made in your career as an entrepreneur.



[7]

## Five Common Pitfalls to Avoid When Building a Personal Brand

AS I KEEP MENTIONING, you need to build a personal brand if you want to succeed with building instant credibility and trust with prospects and clients. Your personal brand enables your reputation to precede you.

If you have a great reputation, you don't have to do much heavy lifting for all these doors to open to you. It takes less effort to open and close a deal. It all goes back to building a personal brand. The stronger your personal brand, the less effort and time it takes to establish credibility.

With that said, there are just so many ways you can drop the ball when building a personal brand.

Even though you face an almost infinite range of pitfalls, they all fall within five major categories. In this chapter, I have summarized them so you can get a clear idea as to what they are and how to avoid them.

### **PITFALL 1: COPYING ANOTHER BRAND**

The key to a personal brand is exactly that. It is personal. It is never a copy of somebody else's brand.

Copycats will always fail. Why? All markets tend to favor people who are innovators or are perceived to be. If you are perceived to be just a copy of somebody else, your brand is going to suffer. You are never going to be as good and as cutting-edge as somebody who is perceived to be an original.

This is why it is extremely important to avoid the temptation of copying another brand. It is very tempting because you save a lot of time, effort, and energy. Why reinvent the wheel, right?

The problem is that there is a right way and a wrong way to copying another brand. I am not against copying brands per se. What I am against is sloppy copying.

It is OK to understand the principles that drive a particular brand in your niche and build a distinctive brand that is all your own based on those principles. Compare this with the common technique of just simply copying another brand. All the elements are the same. Even the graphics being used can be misleading.

Even if you don't copy your competitors enough for them to successfully file a legal case against you, your brand will suffer. You don't want to be perceived as an also-ran or a "me too" brand. You have to be original. You have to be an innovator.

This is why you should focus on what is distinctive about how you do things. Is it your vision? Is it your processes?

Find something that makes you stand out from the crowd, and build your brand around that. You can use principles borrowed from other brands, but the complete package must look original and must be rooted in what is distinctive about what you bring to the table.

## **PITFALL 2: TELLING YOUR AUDIENCE WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR**

Real brands speak from a distinct position. This is what gives them authority. This is what makes them stand apart from the competition. If you are going to bend over backwards trying to tell your audience what they are already hearing from everybody else, your message is going to fall on deaf ears. Why should they listen to you when they can get the exact same stuff from everywhere else?

Unfortunately, rookie brands don't get this. They end up basically parroting what other brands are saying. They are essentially conveying the same constellation of values that other brands are communicating. It is no surprise that these brands fall short. There is nothing distinctive about them, at least when it comes to first impressions.

Your brand has to speak from a distinctive position. It has to bring something to the table that makes it look different. Even though you

may have a thoroughly conventional brand, you should at least create the impression in the minds of your prospects that you go against conventional wisdom that you go beyond what everybody else is saying.

Why do you need to do this? You will earn more respect when you stake your claim and stand your ground. You have to find something that is distinctive, and position your brand around that. Maybe it is a better focus on product research.

Maybe it is a higher emphasis on customer experience. Whatever it is, make sure that it makes your brand look very different from the competition.

Of course, you won't be able to pull this off successfully unless you have thoroughly researched what is out there. Pick apart your competition's brand message.

Figure out what they are doing right and figure out what they are doing wrong. Build on their strengths by offering the same things that they are doing right, but play up the fact that you are offering something they are missing.

This is how you tell your audience your brand's values in such a way that you gain a competitive advantage. Don't merely tell them what they want to hear.

### **PITFALL 3: HERD MENTALITY**

In any niche, there will always be trends. There will always be conventional wisdom. There will always be certain patterns that everybody seems to be following.

It's not a problem for you to follow trends that give you a competitive advantage. In fact, if your industry is heading in a certain direction that will modernize your industry, it can be a good idea to follow the crowd.

However, the problem does occur when brands follow trends just for the sake of following trends. In other words, they don't want to feel

left out. They don't know why they are following. They don't have a firm position or principle that explains why they are following a trend. This is herd mentality, and it will only erode your personal brand.

Instead, you should focus on setting trends. As I have mentioned in Pitfall 1, if you are viewed by your audience members as an innovator, you gain a competitive advantage. Instead of following trends, you set them. If you do this enough times, people will come to you first regarding a hot issue and will try to figure out what you have to say first before they make a decision. This is exactly the level of authority you should aspire to.

Real brands stand out from the herd by riding the herd, not following the herd. Just as a cowboy rounds up the herd and directs the herd of cattle where the cowboy needs the herd to go, your brand should do the same for your industry. Stand out and lead, instead of merely following blindly.

If your brand is perceived as a mere follower, there are really less incentives for your prospects to follow you or take you seriously. Why? If you are offering the same direction as everybody else, they probably would be better off with a better known brand or a more established brand.

#### **PITFALL 4: TRYING TO DO EVERYTHING FOR EVERYONE**

You can't be all things to all people. It is just not going to happen. This is true on a personal basis, and it is definitely true when it comes to branding. You can't position your brand so that it is the Swiss army knife of your industry. As the old saying goes, "Jack of all trades, master of none."

In this day and age, you establish a higher degree of credibility if you are micro-specialized. This is why it is extremely important to finely tune your brand so that it is closely associated with a tight range

of subject matters. Micro-Specialize. The sooner you do it, the sooner your brand becomes successful.

This all really takes one simple step. Stake out a niche. Figure out the rough borders or outer perimeter of that niche, and stay within that niche. Own that niche. Once you have established a lot of credibility there and you are the undisputed authority in that niche, then and only then should you start thinking about expanding your niche coverage.

I have seen it time and time again. People who try to establish a personal brand in one particular area get really comfortable and try to scale up. Nine times out of ten, they fall flat on their faces.

Why?

They didn't really become fully established in their original niche. Not surprisingly, when they try to branch out, they don't have enough crossover credibility to create much of an impact in the new niche they are branching out to.

Solidify your brand in your current niche. Own that niche. Dominate it, and then start thinking about expanding.

## **PITFALL 5: ESTABLISHING YOUR CREDIBILITY THROUGH SIMPLE DEFINITION**

I have helped many professionals build a solid personal brand, and it really breaks my heart to see people try to build a brand through simple definition. It really is sad to see. They simply tell people why they are credible. They simply tell people why they should be taken seriously.

I am telling you right now, telling is worthless. You have to show people. You have to use actual case studies, testimonials, statistics, and hard numbers to show in no uncertain terms that you know what you are talking about.

The problem with telling people that you are a credible authority is that anybody can make a claim. Anybody can whip out their resume.

Anybody can rattle off a long list of supposed accomplishments. However, unless you relate those accomplishments to the basic needs of your audience, you have failed to establish credibility with them. You have failed to build a solid brand with them.

Accordingly, I recommend using the power of case studies, numbers-driven testimonials, and other data-heavy methods of establishing brand credibility. Otherwise, as I keep repeating, you would just be another voice in the crowd. You would be simply playing the game the same exact way failed brands in your niche are playing the game.

You don't want to play a losing game. You don't want to play the game to lose. You have to show people why you are credible, instead of merely telling them. Otherwise, it is just going to take too long to get to where you need your brand to go.



[8]

## How to Instantly Establish Credibility through Personal Branding

NOW THAT I HAVE GONE through the mindset and the common mistakes and misconceptions involved with building a solid personal brand, I am going to now step you through the process of building instant credibility.

The process begins with you. The process begins with your knowledge. The process begins with your command of niche knowledge.

It is extremely important that we trace the whole instant credibility-building process from the beginning. Some of these steps may seem like no-brainers to you. They may seem like common sense.

However, bear with me because the clearer I draw the steps and the more numerous they are, the less likely it will be for you to miss a step or assume too much and end up failing.

Of course, no step-by-step guide would be absolutely complete. All niches are different. All niches have their own particular set of circumstances.

However, as I have mentioned earlier, my aim is to give you enough of a framework so that you can have enough to apply to your particular niche and understand if any elements are missing so you can fill them in using your direct niche experience.

## **STEP 1: GET A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR NICHE**

A niche is a body of knowledge. You might think you already know everything about your niche. Chances are you would be mistaken. Chances are you may have assumed things that are not there or were blind to key issues that have a direct impact on your success.

If you want to build a solid personal brand in your niche, it is extremely important to get a proper understanding of your niche.

This is non-negotiable. You have to resolve to learn as much as possible about your niche. Before you rush out there and read everything on your niche, you need to go through Step 2.

It is too easy to spend a lot of time, effort, energy, and money doing Step 1, only to disregard a lot of the stuff that you learned.

## **STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR NICHE TIGHTLY**

As I have mentioned in Pitfall 4 in Chapter 7, you can't be a jack of all trades. Your personal brand must be tightly focused onto a niche or preferably a subsection of a niche or sub-niche. The reason why you need to do this is you need to define your niche tightly for maximum control.

Some niches look deceptively simple. They may look pretty straightforward. However, when you start digging into them, they are actually quite deep. They actually involve many different parts.

They may overlap with other niches. It can go on and on. You might end up stepping into something that you can't get out of easily.

This is why it is extremely important to define your niche tightly. You are defining your niche so you can maximize control over both your time and your resources. If your niche isn't defined narrowly, expect to waste a lot of time and money only to have very little at the end.

By tightly defining the body of knowledge you are going to work at becoming an expert in, you are going to save yourself from a lot of unnecessary headaches down the road.

Also, the tighter your niche, the easier it is to become an expert in that niche. Once you have reached a high degree of authority, you can then scale up from there.

## **STEP 3: READ UP**

This may seem like common sense. But I have to emphasize that reading up doesn't just involve resources that are directly related to your niche. You also have to look at alternative sources of information.

Look at social media. For example, on Twitter, people tweet all sorts of niche-related information. This may not be available to you if you are just going to read only reference sites dealing with your niche.

Another rich source of information are blog networks.

Look for blogs that focus on your niche. You might be able to get an idea as to the latest controversies that involve your niche. You might be able to discover the hot technology trends that involve your niche.

Read as many different sources as possible. Look at Facebook groups. Look at Facebook fan pages. Get as much information regarding your niche as you can.

Of course, you should not take everything you read for gospel truth. You have to always compare what you come across with previous information. See if everything lines up.

Also, you would notice that the more you read, both online and offline, a certain consensus knowledge comes to view. This is the conventional wisdom regarding certain topics in your niche.

It is well and good to have a firm command of this information, but it is also a good idea to keep track of what the minority opinions are.

There are always two sides to a story. There may be certain controversies or trends in your niche that are settled. But if you want your personal brand to become thoroughly authoritative, you need to also get a working knowledge of what the dissenting opinions are.

This way, when you produce material or you reach out to influence readers, you come off as a true expert. You are not just parroting information that everybody agrees on.

#### **STEP 4: FIND NICHE LEADERS AND REACH OUT**

I have some good news and some bad news.

First, the bad news. Regardless of your niche, there will always be people who started before you. These are people who have built websites. These are people who have blogged about your niche. These are

people who have taken the time, effort, and energy to become experts in your niche.

If you are just simply starting out at that niche or trying to become credible in that niche, you would have to deal with these people and guess what. They will always have a head start over you. After all, they started before you.

The good news is that they can be your fast track to instant brand credibility. By identifying who the opinion leaders in your niche are, you can assemble together a bunch of credible people whom you can reach out to. By reaching out to them, coordinating, and collaborating with them, they can lend you some of their credibility. If you do this right, instead of taking forever to reach their stature, you can actually benefit from their authority and credibility to speed up your rise to niche mastery and authority.

It is all about figuring out who is worth knowing in your niche and reaching out to them. Get on their radar. Be helpful. Be useful. The sooner they feel you are indispensable, the greater your influence becomes.

## **STEP 5: ENGAGE NICHE LEADERS AND SWAP IDEAS**

In Step 4, it may seem like you are just figuring out who's who and reaching out to them. It may just seem like a waste of time because, since these people are influential in your niche, it is natural that strangers would reach out to them all the time.

How exactly do you engage with these people so you come out as a hero instead of a regular zero? Very simple. You swap ideas with them.

One of the greatest challenges of any influence leader in any niche is to get up to speed on the latest news or trends in that niche.

When you engage niche leaders and you swap news stories, trend stories, and opinions with them, you provide them with a valuable free

service. By interacting with them, you give them the information that they need to retain their current status in your niche.

Also, you help yourself because you need to get this information anyway to become authoritative.

It is a two-way street. The more information you feed them, the more information they feed you back. This information then builds your overall body of knowledge, and takes you one step closer to becoming a real expert in your niche. Also, the more information credible niche leaders feed you, you can redistribute this information to other niche leaders who may not have heard of it.

What I am trying to get at here is that you should conduct your engagement activities as an info middleman. By positioning yourself in the middle, you are simply redistributing information from known experts.

Of course, you should include your own research. But by being in the middle, engaging niche leaders in an intelligent way doesn't have to take as much work as you may have originally thought.

## **STEP 6: COLLABORATE WITH NICHE LEADERS THROUGH INTERVIEWS**

People love to get interviewed. People love to get their egos stroked. Niche leaders are no different.

If you first engage niche leaders by asking them questions and sharing industry information with them, the next step is to interview them. When you interview them, they are forced to recognize you. They are forced to pay attention to your credentials.

You have to understand that niche leaders are always in search of new platforms to increase their niche leadership. They are always looking for new outlets so they can extend their reach in your niche.

This is why it is really important that you not only reach out to niche leaders on social media and through their websites, but also collaborate with them regarding interviews. You have to have a blog or a website that you control.

Ask influential people in your niche if you can interview them. In your interview, it is really important to play up your credentials as well. This way, they are put on notice that they are not being interviewed by some random person. Your credentials will show them that you know what you are talking about and that you are a credible source of information in your niche.

If you interview enough people and those interviews get enough publicity in your niche, you can ride on the credibility of the person you are interviewing. Eventually, it will come to the point where influential people in your niche are looking to interview you. That is where you need to go.

Reaching that stage is a clear indicator that you have established a high level of authority, knowledge, and credibility in your niche. It all begins with outreach and you doing the interviews.

## **STEP 7: BECOME INDISPENSABLE TO NICHE LEADERS THROUGH NEWS AND COMMENTARY**

Once you have reached out to niche leaders, it is not uncommon for them to connect with you on social media. Alternatively, they can connect with you through email. Regardless of how they get a hold of you, it is extremely important for you to make yourself indispensable.

As I have mentioned in Step 5, you really should try to put yourself in the middle of your niche. You should make it your job to find out the latest and greatest news and commentary involving your niche.

When you have this information and you share it freely with niche leaders you communicate with, you become indispensable in their

minds. You become the "go to" person for a certain type of information.

The more they go back to you, the more credible you become in their eyes, the higher the likelihood they would introduce you to other niche leaders. This also increases the likelihood that they would want to interview you or link to content you publish.

Regardless of the form, when you become indispensable because of the third party information you are sharing, it becomes easier for people to recommend you to their audience.

It becomes easier for influential voices to link to you and be associated with you. The more high quality brands associate with you, the faster it would take for your own personal brand to reach a high level of credibility.

## **STEP 8: GET NICHE LEADERS TO LEND YOU CREDIBILITY BY REPUBLISHING YOUR THIRD PARTY CONTENT**

Twitter is a very powerful credibility-building tool. There are many influential niche leaders on Twitter. By simply sharing high quality content with these accounts, you can position yourself to benefit from their credibility.

How do you do that?

When they retweet or share your tweets, they are associating their brand with yours. They are telling their followers in no uncertain terms that they find you credible.

If you send high quality content and your content gets retweeted enough times by the same niche leaders, eventually, enough of their followers would click on your name and follow you.

Eventually, you would be able to recruit a decent chunk of these influence leaders' followers to follow your brand.

This is extremely important because this highlights the power of brand association. As the old saying goes, "Birds of a feather flock together."

If your target audience sees that the people they look up to in your industry follow you, your target audience would want to know more about you and would give you the benefit of the doubt if you recommend a particular product or service. That is how it works.

Don't neglect the power of simply republishing niche-targeted content produced by other parties to make your brand stand out. At this stage, your main concern should be to be looked at as a credible source of information.

You are not sharing your own content yet. You are not self-promoting yet. Instead, you are just focusing on establishing your trustworthiness in terms of your ability to pick high quality relevant information in your niche.

## **STEP #9: GET NICHE LEADERS TO LEND YOU CREDIBILITY BY PUBLISHING YOUR CONTENT**

In Step #8, you can get a lot of credibility by simply having influential people in your niche to republish or share your tweets and other social media communications. Of course, in Step #8, you were simply sharing content that's not your own.

This is highly relevant and highly important information published by third parties. These may or may not be competitors. It doesn't matter. What's important is that this information is highly credible, highly targeted, and very useful.

You get a lot of credibility because when you share this information with niche leaders on social media, they can see how in tune you are with the latest news and trends in your niche.

By simply sharing third party information, you show influential people in your niche that you know what you're talking about, and that you are a valuable source of information.

The downside to Step #8 is that you don't get a direct benefit. Don't get me wrong, you get a tremendous benefit when these influential people start viewing you as an indispensable hub of information.

However, in terms of direct benefits like traffic, you won't benefit from Step #8 because you're sharing links that are not from your website.

In Step #9, you gain credibility by publishing your own content and sharing that content. The same credibility benefits of Step #8 apply. However, you get the added benefit of direct traffic to your website.

This is extremely important because this is the name of the game. You are establishing a strong personal brand so you can get people to go to a target website.

In the beginning, this may be your own website. Your website blog seeks to promote you as an authority figure in a particular niche. Later on, if you develop clients, you might want to publish your own content but have those materials link to your target client's website.

It's very important to establish a reputation for niche-specificity and niche authority. Otherwise, if you jump straight to this step, you won't get as much direct traffic. This should not be a surprise because you're not credible enough.

You need to go through all the previous steps in sequence so you can build a high enough level of credibility that influential people on social media in your niche would start driving traffic to you based on the quality of your content and your pre-existing level of authority.

## **STEP #10: WRITE INDUSTRY REPORTS**

You know you've hit the big time in terms of industry credibility when you write a report summing up important trends in the industry and

people pay attention. Make no mistake about it, if you are a random person who is new to the industry, and you try to do this, you are wasting your time.

I've put Step #10 at this particular stage because by this time, you have built up enough credibility so that people will actually pay attention to the reports you generate.

You're not writing an industry report just so you can write a report. You're obviously going to do something with this report. If you have done all the steps above, you have cultivated the right relationships on social media, blogs, and niche forums so that you have a distribution network for whatever original content you produce.

Step #9 is really a dress rehearsal for Step #10 and other self-published content. Learn from your experiences with Step #9. If you don't get enough traffic by publishing your own content, you may need to grow deeper roots in your niche.

You may need to go back to Step #8 and earlier steps to increase your level of authority. Once you have gotten really good results from Step #9, you need to take things to a whole higher level by going through Step #10 and the additional steps we are about to cover.

Step #9 is a crucial stage. This is where you really feel out your real status level with people that matter in your industry. If you noticed that they share your published content a lot, and they actually send a lot of direct traffic, this means you have achieved a high level of authority.

However, if you don't get that much exposure, or they're not really sending all that much traffic, you may need to focus on Step #9 and previous steps until you start getting the results that you're looking for. In no case should you progress to Step #10 and beyond.

## STEP #11: SELF-PUBLISH A TIGHTLY DEFINED NICHE INDUSTRY BOOK

Next time you're at a dinner party, pay attention to how people react when they hear that somebody is a published author. You would realize that people would pay more attention to that person and are more willing to give that person the benefit of the doubt when it comes to the topic of that person's book.

The reason for this is that people have a high level of respect for authors. These are people who took the time and the effort to write a book about this specialized knowledge they hold.

While most of us tend to specialize in a narrow range of topics, it takes a special kind of person to actually go out and publish a book covering micro-specialized subject matter.

This is why self-publishing a niche-specific industry book can go a long way in establishing a solid personal brand and building iCAT with your audience. In fact, if you followed the previous steps and developed a solid enough distribution network for your content, one of the first things you should do is to publish a tightly defined "One Problem, One Solution" (OPOS) book.

An OPOS book takes the concept of addressing one major problem your prospects and clients have, and answering it from various perspectives. This book uses the very same OPOS formula.

Before sitting down to record the chapters of "Credibility Breakthroughs," I asked myself, "What's the single biggest challenge my prospects and clients have in getting more people to choose them over their competitors?"

The answer was, lack of credibility, lack of trust. Through hundreds of hours of consulting, the pattern was as clear as day to me. People were great at what they do, but their audiences were not getting the chance to benefit from that, because of their positioning. They were not giving people sufficient reasons to trust them.

So I wrote the book around that one specific problem, credibility and trust. I'm sure this is beginning to make sense to you and hopefully, some light bulbs are popping, as you maybe for the first time consider the possibilities of becoming a published author too.

Anyway, I've put this step after Step #10 because Step #10 forces you to get a clear idea regarding the trends, news, and developments of your niche.

In other words, Step #10 forces you to do your homework. Once you've collected enough knowledge in your niche, you have enough information to do Step #11 (publish your own book).

Don't get the order wrong. This order is deliberate and well-thought-out. I've put them in this particular sequence for a reason.

Once you've self-published your book, put it on Amazon Kindle. It's really important to get it published in one of the most visible platforms on the planet.

You may be asking yourself, "Well, since this is a self-published book, won't people view me as less credible than somebody who was published by a major publishing house?"

Not necessarily.

In fact, the moment you present yourself as a published author, the focus then shifts to your area of expertise. That's how much automatic credibility is accorded to published authors.

Don't worry about the fact that you are self-published. In fact, if you play your cards right, even if you are self-published, you can gain a tremendous amount of niche exposure if you publish enough books in certain sub niches of the larger niche you are covering.

Remember, for the majority of people, the thought of publishing a book is a mammoth task, and in some genres, specifically fiction related books, such is the case. However, fiction or non-fiction, in the eyes of your prospects and clients takes a lot of time, effort, and discipline. Society, in general, gives a lot of respect for people with enough focus and knowledge to publish a niche-specific book.

Thankfully, these days, you can become a published author without having to write a book. With the help of a professional, you can speak your book, have it recorded, transcribed, edited, formatted, published and promoted in a relatively short amount of time, usually 60-90 days.

**Step #12: Issue periodic news releases that reference your published work**

You should produce as many news releases as possible. If you have accomplished a new milestone in your development as an expert, issue a news release. The more news releases you issue, the bigger of an impact you will make on your niche.

It may seem in the beginning that all these news releases aren't really adding to your credibility. Don't get impatient. It's all about laying out the groundwork. Once you produce a lot of industry reports and self-published industry books, all your news releases will have more and more meat.

More and more influential people in your niche will pay attention to what you're doing and this can lead to all sorts of free publicity. You can get interviews, get cited as a resource in a news article, asked to contribute a guest blog post, radio and TV appearances and other reputation-boosting benefits.

Don't think that you're just wasting time issuing a news release. As long as you do it regularly, and as long as you write news releases that are truly newsworthy, you are going to reap solid benefits later on.

The key here is to issue news releases that are newsworthy. They should have enough information for professional journalists to build solid niche-specific news stories on.

### STEP #13: CONTRIBUTE CONTENT REFERENCING YOUR PUBLISHED WORK

In Step #12 above, you are using the news releases to publicize the fact that you're already a published author in your niche. This can lead to greater industry attention to what you have written and most importantly, to the high level of expertise you bring to the table.

Even if your news releases don't do much to increase the sales volume of your published work, you can still benefit by getting your name out there. It's all about staying on the industry radar and getting people that matter to pay attention to your name which is your personal brand.

Similar to news releases, contributed content can also be used to highlight your published work. If you've written an industry report, or if you've written an industry book in the past, you can use guest posts to highlight these past accomplishments. The more you spread the word that you've gone beyond your competition in mastering the information in your niche, the stronger your brand becomes.

Don't overlook any kind of opportunity to broadcast your expertise. If niche-specific blogs ask you for guest posts, don't turn them down. As long as they reach the target audience that you're trying to reach, they are fair game. Of course, don't abuse these opportunities by contributing content that is forgettable, generic, or low quality. You have to always remember that every time you communicate with the larger world, you are giving the opportunity to develop an opinion on your personal brand.

This is why all news releases you produce, all books you self-publish, and all industry reports as well as guest posts you create must be of the highest quality possible.

By quality, I am of course talking about a mixture of deep information and accessible formatting and wording. What's the point of being a truly credible expert in your niche when people wouldn't want

to read your materials because you write in a very boring way? Similarly, people are scared off if you format your text in huge blocks of text. Nobody wants to read that stuff, especially on the Internet.

This is why you have to format your materials to maximize readability. Your format choices depend on where the content will be published. If it's going to be published online, use very short sentences and short paragraphs.

If it's going to be published in a book, you can get away with slightly longer formats. Regardless of what you do, maximize readability. You cannot build credibility and explode the reach of your influence if people don't want to read your material. I hope this makes sense.

Whether you are asked to write an article that will go on to an article database, or you are asked to write a guest post, make sure you always reference your previous published work. This doesn't necessarily have to take the form of a link. It can be as simple as merely spelling out the titles of the stuff that you have published before.

The key here is to inform the reader that you are a subject matter expert. If you have enough contributed content published in your niche, your name will be almost unavoidable.

Interested parties in your niche will keep running into your name. As a result, your brand continues to build momentum, which will take you to Step #14.

## **STEP #14: GET INVITED TO INDUSTRY EVENTS**

If you did all the previous steps above correctly, you would become an obvious candidate for a seminar presentation at an industry event. If you're just starting out, don't get your hopes up that you will get invited to the main or biggest industry events. It's okay to start small.

Regardless of what niche you're in and which industry you're targeting, there will always be some sort of hierarchy of industry events. There may be smaller regional or local events. Don't neglect those.

Why?

Because people who attend those events might get so impressed by your presentation that they would tell other people who are looking for influential people for larger events. You would be surprised as to what kind of doors would open to you just because you agreed to speak at an otherwise purely local industry event.

The key here is volume. We're not necessarily talking about quality. Just get yourself invited to as many industry events as possible. The wider the audience reach in your niche, the better. However, never be afraid of starting small.

Once you get invited, it's extremely important for you to really knock the ball out of the park by giving people information that they can't get elsewhere. If you can't do that, at least play up your personality in such a way that your audience members would remember you.

The biggest danger of industry events is that they are boring and waste people's time. If you stand out from all the other boring presenters, and you really come up with information that they would be interested in, you are pretty much assured that you will be invited to other industry events.

## **STEP #15: POST INDUSTRY EVENT VIDEOS**

Once you get invited to an industry event, your next step should be to post videos of your presentation in that event. This is a way of getting as much value from that event as possible.

Even if few people attended the event, if you have a video of the highly compelling content that you shared at that event, this may be all you need to expand your influence.

Post your video on YouTube and take that YouTube link and share it on social media, blog comments, and niche forums. Of course, there's a technique to this. You don't want to come off like you're just

dropping links and leaving. If you're doing that, you're just simply spamming.

That's not the way to succeed with personal brand building. Instead, you should engage people in a conversation. Once the conversation focuses on the topic of the industry event you presented information at, mention the video link and provide some background for it.

If you play your cards right, instead of looking like spam, your link would actually be a valuable piece of content that people can benefit from. It's all about how you position self-promoting material.

Don't just go out there and just drop links to your blog posts, articles, interviews, and industry videos carelessly.

That's not going to build your brand. In fact, that kind of works against your brand. Instead of positioning yourself as a credible educator and trustworthy advisor, your brand might get tarnished as sleazy, spammy, and probably a scam. *You don't even wanna to go there!*

## STEP #16: GET AS MANY INDUSTRY EVENT INTERVIEWS AS POSSIBLE

Regardless of the industry event that you participate in, chances are there would be some interviews there. Chances are you could find the links to these interviews online by doing a simple Google search on the name of your event and the word interview.

If you noticed that there are quite a number of interviews of people who participated in the event, reach out to those websites that did these interviews. Ask to be interviewed and give them the link to your presentation at the event.

Get as many event interviews as possible. The more your name is associated with certain industry events; the more people will associate you with a specific body of information.

Moreover, when you get interviewed, you instantly get plugged into a niche-specific audience base. This is a tremendous opportunity to speak to people who are in your target audience. Don't blow this opportunity.

Actively seek out interviews involving the industry event that you played a role in or your industry in general. Usually, once you get a few interviews going, the interview opportunities tend to snowball.

Obviously, you are credible enough to get interviewed in the first place. Eventually, other blogs and websites that do these types of interviews will pay attention to you and would want to interview you.

If you don't want to wait for them to approach you, you can be proactive by simply looking up interviews of your competitors or big time niche players. Find those websites or blogs. Reach out to them and tell them that you are available for interviews as well.

Mention links of past interviews as well as the link to your industry event videos. If you have enough of these links, getting interviews should not be a problem. The easier it is for you to get interviews, the more interviews you will get.

The key here is to get as many interviews as possible so that you develop a wide following. You infiltrate as many different spheres of influence in your niche as possible. What makes this step challenging is getting that first interview.

However, as I've mentioned above, if you have that industry event video as well as contributed content published on third party websites, this will make getting interviews much easier.

## **STEP #17: ISSUE NEWS RELEASES PUBLICIZING YOUR INDUSTRY EVENT APPEARANCES**

Just as you would publicize the publication of a self-published book, you should invest some of your budget on issuing news releases highlighting your industry event participation. This is a very important investment because it obviously builds up your personal brand.

In practical terms, it also paves the way for the coordinators of other industry events to invite you to their events. Just as you would want to get as many industry event interviews or niche industry interviews as possible, you should try to get yourself invited to as many industry events as possible. Try to make sure that all these invitations are for seminars and special presentations.

If you do everything right, and you've established a critical mass of industry credibility, don't be surprised if you get invited as a headline speaker or even keynote speaker. You might be surprised by this possibility, but the reality is that even the most well-known public event speakers in your niche had to start somewhere.

Before they became famous, they were nobodies. The same applies to you. Right now, you're just cutting your teeth in your industry and trying to make a name for yourself.

By issuing news releases publicizing your industry event appearances, you're laying the groundwork to eventually land top billing or the most important speaking slot in the biggest events in your industry. It's not going to happen overnight, but it's definitely a journey worth taking.

## **STEP #18: POST WEBINARS**

For this step, I don't want you to confuse this with holding a live seminar at an industry event. They are two totally different things.

A webinar can be a live seminar streamed from your webcam to a live audience. I'm telling you right now that it's not a very efficient way

of holding a webinar unless you have a massive mailing list. If you have a massive mailing list, there would be enough people there to make live webinars worth it.

For this step, I'm focused primarily on canned online seminars or canned webinars. A canned webinar is a prerecorded online seminar that your target audience members can access at their convenience.

This is a win-win situation. When you shoot video of a seminar and place it on the Internet, it becomes a permanent asset. People can download it at their convenience. You can educate people all over the world at any time, and the value of that video collection grows with time.

I suggest that you create niche-specific webinars in the form of modules. Regardless of the niche you're in, there will always be common questions regarding different aspects of your niche. This is natural, and this is to be expected. Different people might be given the same information, but they would come out with different questions.

By creating modular online seminars complete with PowerPoint presentations and maybe intro music, you can provide a very professional branding experience to audience members who are looking for highly specific information. The higher the quality of your webinars, the more credible your personal brand becomes.

Eventually, you want to reach a point where, due to the impact of your previous webinars, your audience members won't hesitate to tell other people about your webinar links. Moreover, these video materials are so credible they expect niche bloggers to link to these materials.

It's really important to maximize online video platforms in your webinars. What I mean by this is that you must always watermark your webinar video with the domain name of your main site or blog.

This way, even if people steal your videos, share, or embed your videos without your permission, your domain name will always be present and the viewer will always have means of knowing the brand

behind the video. They will also have an idea as to how to get in touch with you or get more information from you.

Keep in mind that some scammers even blur out watermark domain names. This is why it's crucial for you to mention your website name in the actual presentation you give in the video.

Maybe mention your website every four minutes or every five minutes. Regardless of how long your video is, make sure you mention your domain name there verbally.

Of course, you should mention your domain in as natural a way as possible. The mention should fit the presentation and the flow of the presentation. Don't appear like you're just dropping your domain name every chance you get. That would get in the way of the flow of your video. Don't be surprised if this turns off some of your viewers.

## **STEP #19: POST CO-SPONSORED WEBINARS**

This is one of my most favorite ways of building a solid personal brand in any niche. Before this step, you have reached out to influential people in your niche. In many cases, you probably have developed friendships with them.

For this step, you need to reach out to influential people or other established names in your niche and invite them to co-present a webinar. You can even write the script, do all the preliminary research, and do all the initial legwork. In other words, you are going to lay it out for them.

All they need to do is show up. By doing their homework and spoon-feeding them the content that they will be talking about, you increase the likelihood that the bigger names in your niche would want to do this with you.

You benefit tremendously because as I've mentioned in previous steps above, birds of a feather, flock together. There is such a thing as credibility by association.

If you hang out with credible people who are known established authorities in your niche, they can't help but radiate some of their credibility to you. By simply appearing in the same video as these credible brands, your brand can benefit tremendously.

Be mindful that some of the more established players in your niche would want to ask for money. In such a case, skip those people and look for established names who would do this in exchange for you preparing all the materials.

You shouldn't have a tough time finding such people because they know that preparing materials for a webinar is not easy. Researching and gathering information isn't automatic. They know the amount of time, effort, and possibly money involved.

This is why at least one or two established names in your niche would want to do a co-sponsored or co-branded webinar with you.

The good news is once you snag a very big name in your niche, it won't take much for you to get another webinar going with another established name. Once word comes out that a big name has co-sponsored or co-produced a webinar with you, a lot of other big names will get on the bandwagon.

They would assume you're trustworthy and know what you're talking about just based on the fact that you have successfully produced a webinar with an established player in your niche.

## **STEP #20: CO-AUTHOR CONTROVERSIAL OR PROVOCATIVE NICHE BOOKS WITH RECOGNIZED EXPERTS**

As I've mentioned earlier, you're not going to establish a solid personal brand if you play it safe. You have to get a clear idea as to the controversial topics in your niche and take a position. Of course, you have to take a winning position. Meaning, almost all of the evidence must back you up.

However, just because you're taking a majority position doesn't mean that you have to do it in a boring way. Find a controversial angle. Play that up. Make it emotionally engaging. Give the reader a sense of emotional urgency.

Once you've come up with an attention grabbing perspective or a twist to a hot topic in your niche, you should approach recognized experts in your niche and ask them to co-author the book with you.

Of course, they would be asking themselves, "What's in it for me?" Well, the incentive you can give them is that you would do all the writing and all the production. All they need to do is to share the byline with you.

If you follow all the steps, you should have no shortage of recognized experts wanting to be your co-author. It takes no effort on their part, and it gives them a tremendous opportunity to expand their reach.

Of course, you have to legally protect yourself. You need to have some sort of legal agreement with them that stipulates your rights. If you want 50% of the revenue of the book, make sure that it is spelled out in the agreement. If you are giving the book for free as long as they keep your name in the book, make sure that you spell that out as well.

Regardless, don't assume that the recognized experts that you're trying to recruit as co-authors will automatically understand your needs for putting this book out.

Make sure everybody's roles are well-defined as well as their rights and privileges by filling out the right agreement. Otherwise, Step #20 is just going to give you a lot of headaches down the road. You have to protect yourself.

## **STEP #21: GET CERTIFIED**

In most niches, there is at least one certification or accreditation body. Even if the accreditation body isn't well-known, the fact that you went

through the time, effort, and bother of getting certified goes a long way in building your personal brand.

Put it this way: If you're only one of the handful of certified experts in your niche, you automatically put to shame the hundreds of other experts in your niche. Why? You're certified.

Just as people automatically give you a high level of credibility if you mention to them that you're a published author, they also give you such credibility when you tell them that you are certified by a certain accreditation body.

If there are rival accreditation bodies in your niche, try to get certified by all of them. The key here is to get as many indicators of trustworthiness and subject matter expertise as possible. Think of this as Boy Scout awards: the more you get, the better.

Of course, after you get certified, make sure you play up this fact in the news releases you issue, your blog comments, or your contributed articles. Leverage the power of accreditation in building up your personal brand.

## **STEP #22: SCALE UP YOUR MEDIA MENTIONS**

You may think that you are in a very esoteric niche but don't assume that just because your niche is fairly small that nobody in general media is interested.

Scale up your media mentions by reaching out to local TV stations and mentioning your credentials regarding a particular range of topics. There are online resources like HARO (Help a Reporter Out) where you can reach out to media practitioners and let them know about your subject matter expertise.

Call around to local news radio stations and tell producers that if they are looking for an expert opinion regarding a certain range of topics to give you a call. You can do this online as well. All reporters have an email and many of them also have social media accounts.

Reach out to local media. This is lower tier media. The good news is as more and more local media interview you, your chances of getting interviewed or quoted by regional media increases. Once you snag these regional contacts, it's only a matter of time until you get top tier or national media attention.

Again, don't expect this to happen overnight. A lot of this depends on whether there are late breaking or hot news stories that involve your niche or your knowledge set.

### **STEP #23: INTERLINK ALL THE STEPS ABOVE TO SCALE UP YOUR MEDIA EXPOSURE**

It is extremely important for you to interlink all of the steps above so that each step fully leverages the advantages made possible by the previous step. Moreover, all these different activities can serve to feed contacts and exposure to each other.

For example, if you managed to get interviewed on local TV, make it a point to get the news anchor or news reporter interviewing you to mention the title of your books or the name of your website.

You have to be very efficient in marshaling all the attention grabbing forces of the steps above so that they can all lead to solid traffic to your website.

It's extremely important for you to build a mailing list on your website. Since your website is going to function as the central point of all your messaging and brand building activities, you need to have a means of turning the tons of otherwise temporary traffic that you'll get into a stable base of contacts you can build a relationship with.

This is why I suggest you build a mailing list as soon as you buy your central website's domain name.

**PUT UP A MAILING LIST. COLLECT THE EMAILS OF AS MANY VISITORS AS POSSIBLE.**

Since the steps above teach you how to get traffic from as many online and offline media sources as possible, once you get that traffic to your website, make sure you ask them for permission to continue talking to them.

This way, you can build a long-term relationship that will increase in value overtime. Not only do you have to interlink all the steps above, you have to feed all this interlinked traffic and attention to a central online mechanism that enables you to build an online relationship with your visitors.



[9]

Barbara Corcoran: A Case  
Study of Establishing Instant  
Credibility and Trust

THE BEST CASE STUDY I can give you regarding a person who just came out of nowhere to develop a professional profile is Barbara Corcoran.

Barbara Corcoran is a multimillionaire media personality and panel member of the hit ABC TV show, 'Shark Tank.' She first achieved success and attained brand prominence through her New York-based real estate company, The Corcoran Group. Barbara Corcoran started Corcoran Group with a \$1000 loan and sold it, in 2001, for \$66 million.

As amazing as Ms. Corcoran's business acumen may seem, it wasn't all smooth sailing for her. By the time she hit her twenties, Barbara Corcoran went through twenty different jobs. Eventually, she made her way to New York City with one singular dream: succeed in the dog-eat-dog world of New York real estate.

## THE PROBLEM

Barbara Corcoran's real estate company, the Corcoran Group, was a tiny fish in a huge ocean filled with real estate sharks. Her company was so small that, right before she hit her personal branding breakthrough, it was eking out a measly 11 apartment sales. That was peanuts compared to the sales numbers her competitors were racking up.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Barbara noticed that while there was a lot of real estate sales happening in New York, the market was very secretive. Firms didn't want to publicly discuss how many units they were moving and the totals of revenues generated.

Each to their own, but the problem with this industry wide approach was that powerful media outlets like the New York Times had a strong pressing need for this type of information that wasn't being met. Nobody was prepared to give them the inside scoop on what was

considered to be secret insider information until... drum roll please, enter Barbara Corcoran.

## THE INITIAL BREAKTHROUGH

Barbara knew that her tiny firm was just one of many and it was very easy for it to be overlooked. After all, there wasn't much differentiating her company from others because most prospective real estate clients (at the time) had never heard of her company. She decided to leverage her insider data knowledge of the New York real estate market-and convert it into media attention.

She compiled a report on her firm's real estate sales, called it the "Corcoran Report", and made sure a large number of New York Times reporters got a copy. The results were phenomenal!

The New York Times issued a news item that discussed the average selling price of an apartment unit in New York and cited Barbara Corcoran as a source. She effectively recruited one of the most powerful and influential news organizations on the face of the planet to spread her brand.

The impact of the Corcoran Report's media dissemination campaign was spectacular. From being a tiny fish in the huge New York City real estate market, Barbara's company, the Corcoran Group, became a premiere local real estate brand.

How?

Well remember this, *"The media subconsciously assigns credibility and trust to people, and people subconsciously assign credibility and trust to the media."*

Her report did exactly that by placing her in the spotlight as a helpful educator, advocate and trustworthy advisor for her clients' success. It highlighted her expertise and positioned her as a credible authority by media outlets who carry wide influence. In a sense, it was like getting third party endorsements from a major media outlet.

## PERSONAL BRANDING IMPACT

From Barbara's first public relations coup with the New York Times' citation of the Corcoran Report, she went on to build on her brand awareness by becoming a published author, public speaker, syndicated columnist, and a national TV personality. She used that initial break with local media as a fast track to bigger and greater branding opportunities. The good news is if she can do it, you can do it too.

## KEY LESSONS FROM BARBARA CORCORAN'S CASE STUDY

### LESSON #1: DON'T LET YOUR LACK OF INITIAL 'EXPERTISE' HOLD YOU BACK

Considering the fact that the Corcoran Group only sold 11 units, it wasn't in a position to be the definitive 'authority' in New York real estate. Its numbers were too low and its representative sample, as far as the health of the market as a whole, was too limited.

Regardless, none of this stopped Barbara Corcoran from building a solid local brand. Why? Her competition were not prepared to share information that the media so desperately needed at the time.

The relative lack of information allowed Barbara to become an instant expert based solely on the fact that she sold real estate in the New York City market.

That was good enough for the media and that was good enough for Barbara to establish a solid brand. She didn't let the fact that she wasn't 'big enough' to be a 'true expert' in the market hold her back.

### LESSON #2: SEIZE YOUR BRAND'S REACH AND CONVERT IT INTO SALES

Barbara didn't waste time after the Corcoran Group's brand awareness exploded thanks to the Corcoran Report. She used the increased awareness of her real estate firm to get more clients, close more sales, and get more results.

Once your brand gets mileage, increase its branding power by using your brand's increased reach to rack up more sales and results.

The more sales and results you get, the more your target audience will view you as the obvious expert that can help them to achieve their desired outcomes. This creates an upward spiral of success, authority, credibility and trust.

LESSON #3:    EXTEND YOUR BRAND ACROSS DIFFERENT MEDIA CHANNELS

After becoming a local market resource in New York, Barbara Corcoran actively campaigned to extend her brand across as many media channels as possible. She got on TV, she got published, and she got tons of interviews. In other words, she didn't just sit on her laurels after achieving her initial credibility breakthrough.

You should not be afraid of starting small with your branding campaign. You shouldn't have a 'Go big or Go home' mindset, which is nothing more than a self-suffocating entitlement mindset.

Instead, pursue your personal branding campaign the way Barbara did. Start small but scale up and scale out from there. You scale up by leveraging your brand's success to achieve more results in your field of expertise.

You scale out by using your brand's increased awareness to get your foot in the door in different media channels-radio, the Internet, books, magazine articles, you name it. The key is to explode your brand's reach wide open.

Best of all, the more Barbara Corcoran appeared in media, the stronger her brand got. Don't waste your media brand awareness opportunities. Let your personality shine through!



[10]

## Turning Impressions Into Conversions

IN THIS CHAPTER, we are going to focus on what to do next once you have established instant credibility and trust with your target audience.

It is really important to go back to my discussion of mailing lists. You have to create your mailing list almost as soon as you register your domain name.

That is how important your mailing list is. What is the point of putting in all this time, effort, and energy into driving potential clients to your website only to see them disappear? That is what is happening with most websites.

Like it or not, the vast majority of people who visit your website will never be back. Most websites have high bounce rates. These are people who, for some reason or another, find themselves at a particular page and quickly decide that the page doesn't have the information they are looking for. They simply bounce out.

If you work hard to develop instant credibility and trust with prospects and clients and you reach out to all these people, the chances of your bounce rate being high is going to be lower. However, it is not going to be so low that you can totally neglect these prospective new clients.

You have to build a mailing list and promote your mailing list so you can convert as much of your otherwise temporary traffic into a semi-permanent pool of return visitors.

Make no mistake about it. Your mailing list gives you many bites at the apple. You don't just get one shot at converting that person. Here are some other tips that will help you change impressions into conversions.

## **MAKE ALL CONTACTS LEAD TO CONTACT INFORMATION**

There are many ways prospects come in contact with your business from the first time. They may be visiting a trusted blog for the latest industry

information. They might be looking through their news feed and checking out the tweets of the influential person they are following.

Regardless of how they come across your business, it is really important to make sure that all those interactions lead to your contact information.

For example, if somebody sees one of your guest posts, make sure that you mention within the content or in the author section a clear and easy way to get a hold of you. Otherwise, you are just wasting your time. You might think that you only need to mention the link to your website and that should be enough. That is never good enough.

A lot of things can happen between them reading your contributed content and them clicking through to go to your web page. Even if they end up going to your web page, they may just end up bouncing out.

It is much better for you to give them a direct contact method. This way, you can strike while the iron is hot. This way, they can get a hold of you at precisely the point in time where they are most impressed with what you have to say.

## INTERLINK ALL OFFLINE AND ONLINE CONTACT INFORMATION

If you or your clients own an offline business, never assume that offline communications can never interact with online methods of communication. At the very least, you should make it a habit of automatically publishing the addresses of all your social media profiles. Online, make it a habit to mention your phone number.

The whole point here is to have both offline and online channels feed into each other. The key is to cast a wide and very pervasive net that regardless of how people come into contact with your business, they always have readily available means of communicating with you. The easier it is for them to contact you, the easier it is for you to convert them.

Normally, people would only go out of their way for a direct contact if they are sufficiently impressed with the information that you have given them. This is very important to keep in mind because the filtering goes both ways. They filter you by gravitating towards highly qualified and highly relevant information. You also filter them because they have to go through some hoops to get a hold of you.

## CREATE A STANDARDIZED RESPONSE SYSTEM

You would be surprised as to how many professionals drop the ball once they get an inquiry. They are simply left scrambling so they end up writing things up at the last minute. This is a sure recipe for disaster.

Regardless of how you get notified of your prospect contact, have a template ready. Make sure it is standardized across all contact platforms. At the very least, it should focus on what you have to offer, what is in it for them, and how they can take advantage of your offer.

Have this information ready on your smartphone or tablet. Have a template file ready on your desktop or laptop. Regardless of where you are and when you are notified, make sure you respond in a standardized way.

By composing responses on the go and flying by the seat of your pants, nine times out of ten, you will fail to make the right impression.

If you feel like procrastinating or you feel that you are just not motivated enough, just think back to all the time, effort, and energy, as well as money you spent building a solid brand so you can establish instant credibility and trust with prospects and clients.

Remember all those resources.

If you are able to go that far, it shouldn't take all that much extra effort to come up with a winning standardized response system.

Finally, you have to always remember that everything you do online and offline must lead to conversions. Another way to phrase this is,

never publish a word that you wouldn't mind coming back to bite you. Everything you do online impacts your credibility.

This is why it is extremely important to pick the right communication channels, pick the people to contact, and pick the right words. Otherwise, you risk losing the very credibility and trust you worked so hard for.

A good way to visualize your brand is that it is like a shark. A shark will die if it stops moving. Your brand is the same way. Every word you release to the internet or to the offline world must work to build credibility and trust. The more you build it, the more you increase its ability to convert.

However, you must tailor all your communications to maximize credibility building and eventual conversion.

You must also prepare your communications so that they lead to conversions. At the very least, they give you a hook that you can position for eventual conversion. Otherwise, you are leaving a lot of money on the table.

All it takes is a solid game plan as well as the drive, focus, and ambition needed to make it happen. Notice that I didn't mention 'huge amounts of cash'!

Start building your credibility today and watch those doors, both online and offline, fling wide open once your prospects and clients come in touch with your trustworthy brand. If others can do it, you can do it, too.

## Conclusion

Thanks for purchasing and reading my book. I have outlined how you can establish instant credibility and trust with prospects and clients, and how to give them sufficient reasons to choose you, instead of your competitors who are most likely offering inferior products and services

Instead of wasting a huge amount of capital on advertising, you can achieve greater results by simply letting your credible reputation join the conversation already taking place in your prospect's mind.

That's how powerful a personal brand that creates instant credibility and trust can be! Use the steps we've spoken about to help you get there.

Always remember that thanks to social media and modern communications, the playing field to personal branding and credibility building has never been more level!



## One Last Thing...

If you enjoyed this book or found it useful I'd be very grateful if you'd post a short review on Amazon. Your support really does make a difference.

I read all the reviews personally so I can get your feedback and make this book even better. If you'd like to leave a review then go to the Amazon store, type in the book title and leave and write your review on this book's page

Thanks again for your support!

Stewart Andrew Alexander  
Talk Show Host & Contributing Writer



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



53 year old, Stewart Andrew Alexander is a Digital Media Strategist, Contributing Writer and Radio Talk Show Host covering Industry Thought Leaders sharing problem solving insights to help grow your business and live the life you love.

Stewart has lived, worked and built businesses in London for 6 years, Germany 12 years, The Netherlands 4 years, France 4 years, and at the time of writing this book, in Cairo, Egypt for 3½ years.

Fed up with seeing business owners not positioning themselves in the right way, he created, Find, Trust and Choose™, a system that creates engaging, trust building, client attracting content for individuals and organizations, without them having to write, publish and distribute it all themselves.

Alexander adds, "Find, Trust and Choose™ challenges the common belief, that for people to do business with you, they must first get to *Know, Like and Trust you*. While true, Find, Trust and Choose™ provides the missing pieces to the puzzle.

For prospects to KNOW you, they must first be able to FIND you.  
For prospects to LIKE you, you must first give them reasons to TRUST you.  
When prospects TRUST you, they will find it far easier to CHOOSE you.

You can learn more about how Stewart helps entrepreneurs establish instant credibility and trust with prospects and clients by emailing [StewartAndrewAlexander@Gmail.com](mailto:StewartAndrewAlexander@Gmail.com)