

BRANDING

Part 2: Finding Your Voice

Definition of a brand: Unique designs, signs, symbols, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors.

What is the purpose of your brand? We will talk about websites, logos and other extensions of your brand later in this section. But I want to address the sequence of building your brand first. Many people think that the first step is putting up a website with pictures and creating a logo. This is incorrect; it is not one of the first steps, and this is where most people misstep in building the types of brands I touched on earlier.

The key and most fundamental aspect of building a brand is to first ask: what is the goal? Do you want to build your own company? Are you trying to be the most prestigious city club in the state, or do you want to be the next Thomas Keller? Give this some careful consideration and save yourself some time and money by determining what you want to get out of this process. A lot of people just put up a website with a few recipes and wonder why nothing really changes. That's often because there is no call to action, no voice, or no product.

I remember when I first left the Greenbrier and got to film on the show Recipe Rehab. I thought that at that point it would be easy to book the Today Show, or Good Morning America; however the reality was, other than doing the show, I really did not yet have a product to sell, a book to pitch, or a fundraiser I was promoting. It was not until I started doing my international training, classes, and events, that I really started to get traction. I was getting results because my brand was now more than just a logo or a website; it was a product that had a voice. So, what do you hope to accomplish with your brand? Asking this question is the fundamental first step; it will give you direction and will help educate your audience about what they can expect from you.

I think that some of the most overused advice is to "follow your passion." We have all heard this regurgitated by people a million times over the years, but the saying should really be: "*search for* your passion." Look for it everywhere and try many things until you figure it out. What inspires you? What is it that you really enjoy doing? When you find it, you will be able to use it like a compass to point you in the right direction.

Years ago, I learned from a business partner how to be more effective in my marketing. A common marketing mistake is to promote the wrong thing. Often we put up a website or we promote "notoriety or fame" and then wonder why there are no results to show for your hard work. The reason for that is that promoting "fame and notoriety" only really promotes "fame and notoriety." Now, if that is your objective, then you may accomplish it, but you will be folded into the masses of many other people trying to stand out in the crowd waiting for their brand to take off and blossom. Instead, promote a voice, a movement, a service, an initiative, a noble cause, or anything that people respond to. That gets you closer to your goal, and then you have a foundation on which to build the rest of your brand. The voice of the brand is its DNA. It is everything, and ironically, it is often neglected entirely.