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**The "Me" Brand**

**By Sandy Pheil**

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The "Me" Brand

We were taught all through the 80s and 90s to say, "We" and "Us" before "I". It was all about giving credit to your peers before yourself. But how were we supposed to stand out above and beyond the rest? You didn't, and if you did try, you were considered ruthless, untrusting or self centered. So we conditioned ourselves to be a "team player" and say "we" not "I" did that successfully. However, times have changed my friend, and now it's the "Me" age. Now I'm not implying anyone should brag or steal credit from others, I'm merely saying represent yourself – stand up and be heard – honestly and passionately, and become your own brand.

Let me tell you a story. A life changing moment occurred for me in 1998 during my days at the Coca-Cola Company. My mentor spoke to me about positioning myself as a brand. She used Sprite as an example, telling me the story of how the older generations were the Sprite drinkers. But by affiliating the brand with the NBA and targeted advertising, she took Sprite to the #1 soda amongst young, White and African American adults. At the time, I didn't get it. Then I started watching her interact with senior VPs, clearly positioning herself as the expert on youth marketing and brand positioning. Then I realized I was the jack of all trades, master of none, and I needed to represent something, something of value to the company and my future. I needed to identify my expertise and present it via my true personality like she had done. It's called "Me" (the positioning) Branding. Corporations are doing it every day. They have entire departments that focus on nothing but making sure a brand is positioned with the right promotion, price and at the right place. So why aren't we doing the same for ourselves. Does it go back to being taught not to brag, and to say "We" versus "Me"? Positioning yourself as a brand and doing it successfully is not an easy overnight project, rather an absolute necessity to succeed in today's massively, competitive workplace.

The "Me" brand is making sure there is no doubt what your expertise is – what you're passionate about and focused on.

**Importance of Positioning**

Jack Trout is responsible for coining the term "positioning" in the early 1980s. Although a few years have passed since his book, "Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind" was released, the core ideas it

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expresses are just as true today. Basically, positioning refers to the way a product, or posture, a stance. It is all about perception and perspective. In other words, your positioning service, or person is presented to the buying public. Definition of Position: bodily attitude should show your true self and do it with honesty and integrity; it should exude your expertise and personality. Only then, will you win your audience. For example, the band Milli Vanili not only lip-synched their songs, it wasn't even their voice on the track. Milli Vanili could dance, and looked good doing it, but when all was said and done, they lied! The most successful "Me" brand positioning has to be Oprah Winfrey. She is absolutely, self explanatory.

Take a look at the list below and think about Oprah Winfrey. Does she fit into all of these categories? Do you? If not, you need to!

### Be Present in their Presence

- Listen between the lines
- Repeat what they said earlier as a reference point
- Always thank them for their opinion or input, regardless
- Smile, smile, and smile with your eyes
- Encourage and inspire
- Never forget their name

### Teach People

- But, only if they ask
- Never teach a subject you are NOT an expert on - admit you don't have the answer
- Invite feedback and always say, "Did I answer your question?" or "Did I support you"?"
- Provide testimonials, honest ones, not made up by a friend!

### Lastly, but very important

- Stay visible, but choose your visibility wisely, and never ever over stay your welcome!
- Surround yourself with people smarter than you and who represent things you aspire to do/be

Here is a list of a few more people who have done an incredible job at "Me" branding:

### Person

The Trumpster(Donald Trump)Real Estate tycoon  
Dr. PhilTell it like it is Therapist  
MJ (Michael Jordan)Best damn basketball player and Nike  
Stephen KingFright  
Richard SimonsExercise guru  
Susie OrmanFinance consultant for women  
Anthony RobbinsInspirational Speaker  
MadonnaPushing the envelop entertainer  
Howard SternShock Jock

PS: I would have said Martha Stewart, but we must now list her as "Me" brand working in the negative. A huge oopsy on her part.

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Now there is a flip side to "Me" branding. That is when your "Me" branding works in the negative. Again, positioning is everything, branding is another. Milli Vanili was a very well known brand, but they became more popular in the negative. Singer Bobby Brown is another example of the negative. He is now known as a "bad boy" because drugs and alcohol are part of his personality. Do we remember him in the "Me" branding positive? Not really.

As a Life Coach, I have had to determine what my niche, or area of focus would be. I decided I would figure it out as I move along in my coaching profession. Knowing what I know about branding and positioning yourself, I felt as long as I stayed true to my personality, showed integrity and respected my clients, one day it would just connect – and it did. I learned I was very talented at helping people find their true passion and purpose in life. I help people discover their expertise and identify their talents so their personalities will soar. I help them realize that they can accomplish their goals and make all their dreams come true. The most important thing you need to remember is perception is reality! We don't create our perception and opinions of you – it's what you project on us – when, where and how creates it. So as you are out in the day to day, allowing life to happen (because it does), pay attention; you might miss the "Me" branding opportunity.

Exercise:

After these two exercises, you should be well on your way to identifying your "Me" brand.

1. Think of one celebrity whom you admire.

- Write down all the qualities they possess
- Now compare your own values and beliefs about yourself
- Are there things you'd like to change

2. Write down three of your favorite brands.

- List next to each brand the reasons why it's your favorite
- Now pretend you are a brand
- Which one are you (are you Tide, Crest, Coke, Pringles, a Snickers...) and why?

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## **Creating An Unconscious Brand**

**By Rachele Disbennett–Lee, MCC, MS**

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#### Creating An Unconscious Brand

Branding is a big topic in today's business world. Everywhere we look we can see examples of branding. Just think of companies like McDonald's, Coca Cola, and Toyota. These companies work hard to create and maintain their brand images. Branding is actually somewhat of a recent phenomena in business. It was started back with Proctor and Gamble when they decided to name one of their soaps Ivory. Naming the soap proved to be an excellent idea to the detriment of their other soap products. People stopped buying the generic soaps and began buying Ivory. Because of the success

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of Ivory, P&G realized the importance of branding and began a branding revolution. Moreover, branding is not just for companies; individuals have their own brands too.

You may not think of yourself as a brand, but you are. Most of us do not work at creating a specific brand like the big name products that we have all come to know and love. But, it doesn't matter. We are creating a brand everyday, consciously or unconsciously. Unfortunately, most of us are creating our brands unconsciously.

Everything we do, say, wear, every expression and even things we don't say and do create a brand. We cannot not communicate our brand because it is part of who we are. We might have a brand as a trustworthy person, or a good friend, or perhaps something not as positive such as someone who is always late. Our brand is communicated everyday by every action we take.

Stop creating an unconscious brand. Your brand is important because it says who you are and what you stand for. It communicates a great deal of information about you and can help or hurt you. Instead of being oblivious to the brand you are creating, begin taking charge of your brand. Your brand lets others know what you stand for, what they can expect from you and what kind of person you are. Make sure it communicates accurately.

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