

# Industry Pro Interview: Branding - Turning Your Customers Into

## Evangelists

By Karon Thackston

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When you say the word "branding", most people think USP (unique selling proposition). However a USP is far from the equivalent of a brand as we're about to find out. What is branding? Is it just for "big boys"? And how the heck do you create one, anyway?

Rob Frankel (<http://www.robfrankel.com>) has been called "the best branding expert on the planet" and is author of "The Revenge of Brand X: How to Build Big Time Brand&#8482; on the Web or Anywhere Else", (available at <http://www.revengeofbrandx.com> ). He now shares some insights with us that will shed a little light on the branding mystery.

KARON: Thanks for your time, Rob. I know your schedule is packed.

ROB: You're welcome!

KARON: Well, let's start with the basics... everyone in the world has heard the term branding but it is still widely misunderstood. What is the basis of branding and - more importantly - why should a business care about it?

ROBFRANKEL: Branding is THE most misunderstood aspect of marketing. Here's the best example I can give. Just as you're more than a simple name and a face, a business is more than a name and a product. So a brand is as much the way you do things as what you do.

A business should care about it, because THAT'S the stuff that inspires loyalty and motivates people to evangelize the brand. That's where the money is, in more ways than you can imagine.

KARON: So for those who think branding is coming up with a USP and just plastering it all over everywhere... what would you say?

ROB: A couple of things: First, my own branding (Big Time Branding) is not about a USP at all. It's about a UBP... Unique Buying Proposition. THAT'S the problem with almost all brands -- they concentrate on what they have to sell instead of why people want to buy. Also, many confuse

branding with advertising and PR. That's because old ad hacks try to pass themselves off as branding people. Fact is, "First you build the brand, then you raise its awareness."

The brand happens long before either advertising or PR... internally and externally.

KARON: Just like I might wear the same jeans and t-shirt as another woman but I'm very different inside. It's that difference that makes the brand.

ROB: Branding goes down to the core. In fact, I have a Ubiquitous Brand Test in my book: "Are we doing it the COMANY NAME way?" If the answer is no, you're not branded.

Here's another example: Can I send you \$100,000 in cash?

KARON: Well of course you can!

ROB: I'd like to overnight it to you. Is that okay?

KARON: Sure it is!

ROB: Okay, but you have to pay for the shipping... you want me to send it US Post Office or FEDEX or what?

KARON: FEDEX

ROB: Most people say FEDEX... and rightly so. Because FEDEX has a brand image that communicates how they won't let the businessman down. And most people will gladly pay \$15 more for the exact same service, even though they're basically the same. That \$15 difference is pure branding profit.

KARON: Good Point! Now let me ask you this... how do you respond to the statement that branding is just for the big boys?

ROB: JUST THE OPPOSITE!!!! The less money you have, the stronger your brand has to be, because you rely more on your users evangelizing for you. The big boys have the WORST brands because they tend to buy their way out of their problems.

KARON: So, as small business owners, we have to have the complete package - we have to have it all together for our branding to "work"?

ROB: Of course. Remember, that the point of Big Time Branding is to "turn users into evangelists for your brand". Otherwise, what's the point?

KARON: So how do we do that? I realize it's a process and not a 2-step "thing", but give those that have done little or nothing with branding a starting point.

ROB: The problem is that branding has to be done from the outside in, because that's who the brand is for -- people who DON'T know you. Most business owners are too focused on what they've got to sell, not on how they can be "the best solution to other people's problems."

KARON: Boy do I agree 100% with you on that!! With copywriting (my specialty) it's the same way! If you don't know your target audience - can't really get inside their minds - your copy will just be a list of nicely worded facts.

ROB: Exactly!

KARON: OK... then tell me this... What is the most widely made mistake when trying to brand yourself or your product?

ROB: The most common mistake is not heeding the Prime Directive: "Branding is not about getting your prospects to choose you over your competition; it's about getting your prospects to see you as the only solution to their problem."

KARON: Amen to that!!

ROB: They just keep cutting their prices and thinking it's a sales or advertising issue. They keep looking in the wrong places.

KARON: And we know for a fact it is not pricing. That's why people pay \$15 more for FEDEX. That's why people pay \$68 for Liz Claiborne jeans instead of \$25 for Lee.

ROB: Got that right!

KARON: Wow! Some good info here, Rob. I appreciate it very much. Well, any closing words of wisdom?

ROB: I would add that everyone out there is constantly selling, selling, selling. Big Time Brands know that while advertising grabs their minds, branding grabs their hearts. People invest their non-rational loyalties into brands that help them. Make a hero out of your user and you'll turn them into brand evangelists.

KARON: And since "most buying decisions are emotional", you have to hit 'em where they live :-)

ROB: Yeah, it's okay to build a business strategy where part of it is to have people like you!

\*\*\*\*\* Also, here's a Business Essentials Subscriber Freebie... you can visit <http://www.RobFrankel.com/frankelaws.html> for some inside information straight from Rob's book "The Revenge of Brand X".

Most buying decisions are emotional. Your ad copy should be, too! Karon is Owner and President of KT & Associates who offers targeted copywriting, copy editing & ezine article services. Subscribe to KT & Associates' Ezine "Business Essentials" at [join-businessessentials@lyris1.listenvoy.com](mailto:join-businessessentials@lyris1.listenvoy.com) or visit her site at <http://www.ktamarketing.com> .

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