

# Are You Branded & Ready to Market on the Internet?

By Susan Dunn

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"Affluent Americans lead web growth" begins an article from <http://cyberatlas.internet.com> . According to the latest NielsenNetRatings, individuals with household incomes ranging from \$100,000 to \$150,000 are the fastest growing income group online and there are 15,000,000 of them.

So there are your consumers, folks. Are you ready to go after them? Are you branded?

In "Advanced Brand Management," Paul Temporal points out that your image is not your brand. Modernizing your visual image (logo, design, collaterals) "won't effect a change in brand VALUES so the heart of the brand remains the same -- what it stands for or its personality."

In other words, branding isn't a surface thing. Fiddling with your logo and webpage is superficial. It won't change consumer perceptions of quality, service and the other intangibles that make them love you and keep coming back for more.

Love you? Yes, I said "love you."

We relate and attach to people for emotional reasons, because of their personalities, and if you want success on the Internet, you have to project your business' personality.

Personality isn't surface - it's what we perceive the person's values and beliefs to be. William Arruda (<http://www.reachcc.com>), the Personal Branding Guru, will begin your personal branding coaching this way: "Identify your vision, purpose and values." From this will come goals and plans.

ARE YOU COMPANY 'A' OR COMPANY 'B'?

Consumers do perceive your business' personality.

Temporal asked people to define the personalities of two

companies who were competitors. They defined Company A as "sophisticated, arrogant, efficient, self-centered, distant and disinterested". They defined Company B as "easy going, modest, helpful, caring, approachable, and interested".

Not surprisingly, 95% said they would rather do business with Company B. Not surprisingly, Company B is doing a lot better.

How close to Company B are you?

## IT'S ABOUT RELATIONSHIP

The Internet has changed forever the way we do business.

Whatever you're doing on the Internet, it's relational. As Nick Usborne

(<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0071380396/>

susandunnmome-20) points out, the Internet began as a bunch of people communicating and then companies arrived on the scene. We, the people, feel we own the Internet. We don't get in the car and drive to your storefront. You come into our living room, and you'd better give us a good look at you first!

## PROJECTING THAT PERSONALITY

One of the greatest new tools I've seen for Internet branding is ViewMail (<http://discover.8point.com>). It's video email -- the next evolution in Internet business face-to-face. You can chat with your customer, inform them of specials and upcoming events, describe and show items, touch base, and all without the written word!

My values and beliefs in setting up my own coaching practice, which includes a variety of products as well, are exceptional service and connection. My Internet courses include interaction with me personally through email. I never use autoresponders. The chance to interact with the teacher is too important to the learning process; and my chance to interact with a "consumer" is too important to my branding.

Nor do I arbitrarily limit the length of coaching sessions. Yes, it's incredibly time-consuming. This is what branding is all about: from me you will get time and undivided attention.

With ViewMail, I can respond to the learner with a video. My Internet courses stand alone as educational products, but my intention is to build a relationship. I want them to stick around for a long time and keep buying, and many people would rather listen than read.

Letting them see and hear me - get to know my personality - is the next logical and emotional step in my branding process.

If I can engage them in this interaction, I can also hear the problems that need solutions so I can learn what new products and services to offer. Building a business is a relationship that requires feedback and engagement.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF WRITING

Email has extreme limitations for people who can't write clearly, and don't know how to project their personality in writing. It takes extraordinary skill to learn how to be "engaging" in writing. It is also more time-consuming to construct a well-written email than it is to just 'talk' your message.

I suggest if the written word isn't your forte, that you move quickly to a visual medium that allows you to speak, not write.

"A product like ViewMail," says William Arruda (<http://www.reachcc.com>) "provides a great opportunity for you to set yourself apart from the undifferentiated brands that are using traditional email. This format provides clearer communication of your message and your brand."

## WANT THEM CLICKING YOUR BANNERS?

Products such as ViewMail, which includes instant messaging, also give you access to the heaviest users of the Internet. According to NetValue, people who chat online generate twice as many online sessions as the general Internet user, click more banners, and send and receive more email.

Want them clicking your banners? Well, now you know how.

## ABANDON CONSERVATIVE PRACTICES

"Less than 20% of online retailers deploy well-accepted and widely supported Web technologies or chat functions to enhance the online shopping experience and help close sales," says a recent report from Jupiter Communications (<http://www.jmm.com>).

Jupiter urges online retailers to "abandon conservative Web site development practices and optimize their interactive presence in order to match the technical capabilities of most online consumers which can now adequately support a rich interface."

Instant Messaging continues to grow in popularity with more than half of the online population using it. ViewMail and some of these other new products provide IM as well.

## WILL THEY LIKE IT?

"The key to successfully effecting a new look is EVOLUTION, not REVOLUTION," says Temporal. You don't want to disrupt strong brand personality by substantial changes which can destroy emotional attachments, you want to add new things

that are more you.

## TOTAL PROMISE

For effective Internet marketing, quit messing around with surface things, introduce some evolutionary changes, get more interactive, show more personality, and investigate some of the new tools available for branding. Those 15,000,000 consumers with 6-figure incomes are waiting for you to show your face!

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