

Unique and Great and Visible: Three qualities of recognized industry experts

by Helena Bouchez - Spring 2010



Right now, your clients-to-be are out there, searching for an expert who help them solve their business problems. Problems you can solve efficiently. And profitably.

How will they find you? And why will they choose you?

Because not only are you **UNIQUE and GREAT** you're also **VISIBLE**.

The Importance of UNIQUE and GREAT

Uniqueness is without question the most important element of the three. Uniqueness is what will ultimately allow you to maximize your effectiveness and your profits. There are two areas in which you must develop and promote your uniqueness:

1. In what you do (positioning).
2. In who you are (character).

Positioning

Even though it may be hard to hear (especially in this crummy economy) to succeed long term, you cannot continue to be everything to everyone. Because if you do, you will be forced to compete only on price (tempered only by your ability to charm). The problem is, there are a plethora of charming generalists all over the world who are willing to work tirelessly to outcharm you, while simultaneously undercutting you when it comes to price.

To get around this, you must reduce your relevance to most potential clients and become extremely relevant to a smaller number of clients in an underserved market.

For more information about positioning, check out "[5 Insights to Narrow Positioning](#)," a recent MarketingProfs Daily Fix post in which I interview positioning expert and business consultant [David C. Baker](#) on this topic.

Character

After proper positioning, developing your image as a character and personality can provide additional differentiation of you from others who are similarly positioned.

Consider Seth Godin. (Tribes), Peter Shankman (HARO) Avinash Kaushik (Web 2.0 Analytics) and so many others. They are super talented and no one would deny, true characters. What makes you unique. personally? What can you become known for? Disturbing and pushing people? (Seth Godin), Always wearing a nametag? (@nametagscottt). Making SEO seem easy? (Avinash Kaushik). Great interviews and helpful products? (Susan Bratton)

What can you become known for?

Being *unique* (or narrowly positioned and unafraid to be a bit of a character) will reduce your relevance to all available clients and make you relevant to a smaller subset of a carefully selected, underserved market. This allows you to charge more, work more efficiently and hence, more profitably.

But perhaps most importantly, not having to be everything to everyone allows you to focus on your craft, and accumulate a lot of knowledge about a specific area or industry. It is this accumulation of knowledge and experience that sets you apart from the generalists, and makes you truly worthy of the expert appellation and the accolades and attention that come with making yourself *visible* to those who need your services.

And so we come, full circle. Obtaining more new business opportunities then becomes a matter of letting more people know about you.

BECOMING VISIBLE

Until very recently, most professional services deals were primarily a result of existing relationships that led to referrals, which worked as sort of a wheel of wealth, where business was referred and subsequently wealth transferred from one organization to another.

But the current economic climate has drastically reduced the amount of work and consequently, the amount of wealth in play, directly affecting the number referrals even the best sources can make.

There is still business out there, it's just that now you actually may have to look for and possibly, if you're not very narrowly positioned, compete for it.

As you can imagine, it's a lot easier to get in the game if people actually have *heard of you* before. Which is why becoming a recognized industry expert can be such a huge industry advantage.

Here is how it works: Whether the lead/contact is generated via referral or the result of a sales call, the first thing people will do is search online to find out more about you. For this reason (and others) a robust online presence, consisting of content that you've generated or have been instrumental in placing, is essential.

Following are the 10 most important channels to consider; what people should find when they search on your name and specialty.

1. Your company's Website and a blog, with comments enabled.
2. Your LinkedIn profile. This should feature some smart copy, recommendations, and reflect questions answered and comments made on discussions. Linked in's time has come.
3. Twitter link and handle, robust stream of your thinking, links, retweets, referrals, resources and the occasional personal musing.
4. Bylined articles you've written that have appeared in industry publications.
5. Guest blog posts for industry blogs
6. Comments you've made on industry related blogs
7. Links to presentations you've done and posted on Slideshare, YouTube
8. Quotes that you've given to journalists for articles
9. Links to press releases
10. And if you're really on it: An Amazon link to your book. Yes, book.

Let's take a look at each of these channels in more detail:

Your company's Website

If your website is more than three years old or if it is not in a content management system such as Wordpress, Drupal, etc. it probably needs to be redone. You must be able to update your content frequently, and on the fly. (Template upgrades and server stuff can be left to the Web person, however.)

Spend the money to have your site professionally designed. I have heard so many stories of clients who have gone to someone's website with intent to hire or interview them, but were summarily turned off by an outdated website.

Your website does not have to be a work of art, but it must reflect a high level of professionalism. Meaning the site should offer logical navigation, easily accessible contact information, links to articles you've written and media hits, and a professionally designed logo. It also should have a blog, as the goal would be to drive people to it so they can engage in conversations there. But only put one up if you are willing and able to carve out time to post something at least once a week.

A great way to change the content on your website home page frequently is to run your Twitter stream on it.

Other things to spend money on: a professionally shot photograph and search engine optimization.

Professional photographers know how to draw out and capture your professional essence. This photograph should be aspirational, in other words, project an image of someone who is still you, but that projects an image that looks better than you (usually) do.

The ability to get that "aspirational" shot, takes years to develop, and is what separates the amateurs from the professionals. It may be expensive, but it is vital to your image: budget for it. In the interim, at very least have someone take a high resolution photograph of you. For best results, use natural light. Have them stand on a chair and shoot down at you. And keep your chin down. And no self portraits taken with your cell phone. Yes, I know everyone else is doing it. Everyone else would also be squandering an important opportunity to project a powerful and trustworthy image.

Besides referral and prospecting, another option is to work on your website so that it appears on the first page of Google, which can be achieved by search engine optimization your website copy. SEO is a science in and of itself, with its own specialists. If you are looking to optimize your results with organic search, you may want to enlist [professional help](#).

Your Linked In Profile

Your Linked In profile will be one of the first three things to show up in your search profile. It is your business persona and should reflect your professional persona and be *complete*. If you are not a good writer, hire a professional writer to interview you and write the copy for you. The word biography implies someone else is doing the talking, so it should be written in the third person. (Otherwise it's an *autobiography*, not as compelling.) Include a professionally shot photograph. (Hint: use the same photograph everywhere to create a consistent and instantly recognizable impression.)

You also will want to spend some time connecting with people on Linked In with the goal of having (initially) about 100 connections. Connect assertively, but only with people you know. It only takes three people to click "I don't know this person" and your account will be deleted.

Be sure to solicit some endorsements (these become part of your search footprint and you also can use them for your website). You also may want to consider answering questions and starting discussions on LinkedIn, further evidence of your thought leadership.

Twitter

There are varying schools of thought on this and I've done it both ways. But for search purposes, your twitter handle should be your full name, first and last.

Invest some time into building a Twitter following. The best way to do this is to find and follow people whose opinions you respect. Most will follow you back. A robust Twitter following gives you a select audience to whom you can broadcast your thinking, an extremely effective way to get the maximum amount of mileage out of your blogging, writing and speaking efforts.

Twitter also is a great place to start relationships with key influencers and occasionally, prospects. Don't be afraid to initiate conversations with people whose opinions you respect.

Bylined articles

When it comes to bylined articles, things have changed a bit in the past year or so. I'm seeing more short posts that link to longer white papers. Rather than writing the typical 1,000 word essay, you may be better off writing a series of pithy shorter pieces that point to a longer more comprehensive white paper.

When placing articles, your goal should be to saturate the 2-3 most influential channels with your content. Especially if you're narrowly positioned, you don't have to be everywhere. Pick the most influential channels and own them. Note: the most influential channels are not necessarily the biggest or most well-known channels. Do your homework.

Guest blog posts

Most industry publications (if they are still even printing on paper) have added a blog or blogs to their websites. Blogs are a content monster that demand constant feeding. Once you get a few industry articles under your belt, your own blog is full of insightful tidbits, and you've made some intelligent comments on other blogger's posts, you can approach the blog manager and offer yourself up as a contributor. I currently contribute to MPDailyFix.com, which is the Marketingprofs.com blog.

Make sure you contribute regularly (weekly) to keep your name buzzing and your links circulating. Speaking from experience, this can be a challenge and requires some discipline. Again, focus your energies. Regular contribution to a very influential blog will allow you to build a following, which is good for you and your host.

Comments on industry blogs

Commenting on blog posts is a great way to establish relationships with the blogger and the overall blog owner. Bear in mind anything you post in comments becomes part of your search footprint! Use your real name and include a link to your website.

Link to presentations on Slideshare, YouTube

If you are going after speaking gigs, you need to have some kind of presentation up on Slideshare, preferably with an audio voiceover. Better, have someone take video of you speaking (make sure you get audience reaction, too) and post it up on YouTube.com For more details on how to get speaking gigs, read my Marketingprofs.com article. [Get a Speaking Gig: How Event Producers Decide Who Gets Onstage.](#)

Quotes that you've given to journalists for articles

Something you can do immediately: Start building relationships with reporters and journalists that cover your industry to spur them to rely on you as an expert and quote you in articles they write.. A good way to start a relationship is to comment on their articles (remembering that your comment becomes part of your search footprint). Also keep them in mind as you come across newsworthy tidbits, and send them along -- *even if (especially if) they aren't about you*

What not to say: "I am a big fan of your column." Who cares? Demonstrate your value as an expert by adding a pithy comment that adds another dimension to their article.

Links to press releases

No, the press release is not dead. I like Pltchengine.com for the newsroom (\$550/yr), but you can make your own news room on your nifty CMS website, too. The thinking about press releases has changed recently, too. Optimally, you want to be pumping out a steady stream of content ("news") to expand your search footprint, and the perception of your owning the marketing as an expert. There are several free distribution services out there, but for a big, earth shattering "this is truly new" announcement, I'd definitely use a paid service like Businesswire or PRNewswire.

Your book

Yes, your book. If you are an expert, you must eventually find time to write a book. A book reinforces your platform (aka, what you're known for) like nothing else can.

Don't wait until you get an agent or publisher. Write the best book you can write, get it edited, and get it out there in *an electronic format*. For specific information about how to self-publish and promote your book get my friend Bob Baker's book "[55 Ways to Market and Promote Your Book on the Internet.](#)"

Conclusion

My most successful clients are already unique and great, they just need help leveraging those two things to become visible. The ultimate goal is to become so visible, that clients will pick up the phone and contact you, greatly easing the new business process. Until you reach that tipping point (and perhaps after) it's important to have a sales process in place that presses the increased recognition into service, and uses it as a lever to more easily open doors.

Thanks again for listening to my [Disly Mix interview](#) with Susan Bratton. If this paper was helpful to you, please pass it on. If you are a marketing thought leader who would like to discuss these topics in more detail, or how I could help you become a recognized industry expert (coaching or ongoing service) please contact me. I look forward to speaking with you.

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