

BY EMILY YOST

BRANDING & YOU

HOW DO YOU ENSURE THE
WORLD SEES WHAT YOU
WANT THEM TO SEE?



PERCEPTION BREEDS BRAND IDENTITY.

With today's digital world, whether you like it or not, you have been developing a personal brand identity. Friends, co-workers, colleagues and the industry you serve are "getting to know your brand" with every interaction they have with you. So, how do you ensure the world sees what you want them to see?

Let's examine someone who understood what a personal brand was all about – Steve Jobs. He once shared, "I want to put a ding in the universe." That was his driving force in everything he did. He wanted to make an impact in the world and, whether you agreed with his approach or not, he was on a relentless pursuit of excellence. From his products' design, to its packaging, to the stores in which they are purchased, his pursuit of excellence can be found in every aspect of his work.

Continued on page 48



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Continued from page 47

Today, 52.3 percent of all smartphone users in the United States and Canada choose the iPhone. Over half of all cellular phones are iPhones. That's a staggering statistic! How's that for 'a ding in the universe?'

So, what should you be doing to build a strong, clear brand identity? Start by answering these questions for yourself:

1. What do you *want* people to think of when they see you or hear your name mentioned in conversation?
2. What qualities do you *want* linked with your brand when they think of you?
3. Is there a particular subject matter you want to be known for?
4. What visual image do you want to project? How you dress sends a clear message about how you look at your career, yourself and even gives an indication of how you will handle your potential customer's account! Trust is everything in this business.

Once you have answered these questions and done a bit of self-analysis, it's time to audit your personal brand online.

Google your name. Either you are popular for the right reasons or the wrong reasons. Or, perhaps you learn you are not known in the industry at all!

Search keywords that should return results showcasing you or your company.

Research your competition and those you admire.

How are they marketing themselves? What are they selling about themselves? How are they building trust with potential customers? What sites do they come up on? Now, dive into your branding toolbox armed with new information on yourself and how you can better showcase your talents.

Create and maintain a social media presence. LinkedIn and Facebook are good resources for you. Within minutes, they can learn a great deal about your personal brand.

Are you involved in your community? Do you receive accolades or strong testimonials from your clients? Have you been recognized for your efforts within the community management industry? Do you look professional in your photos? Are you dressed for success?

Ensure you are found in industry directories. In addition to CACM's Membership Resource Guide, you can place your information in a plethora of professional directories that offer potential customers an opportunity to choose you over others. Public relations professionals know that it takes 3-7 interactions



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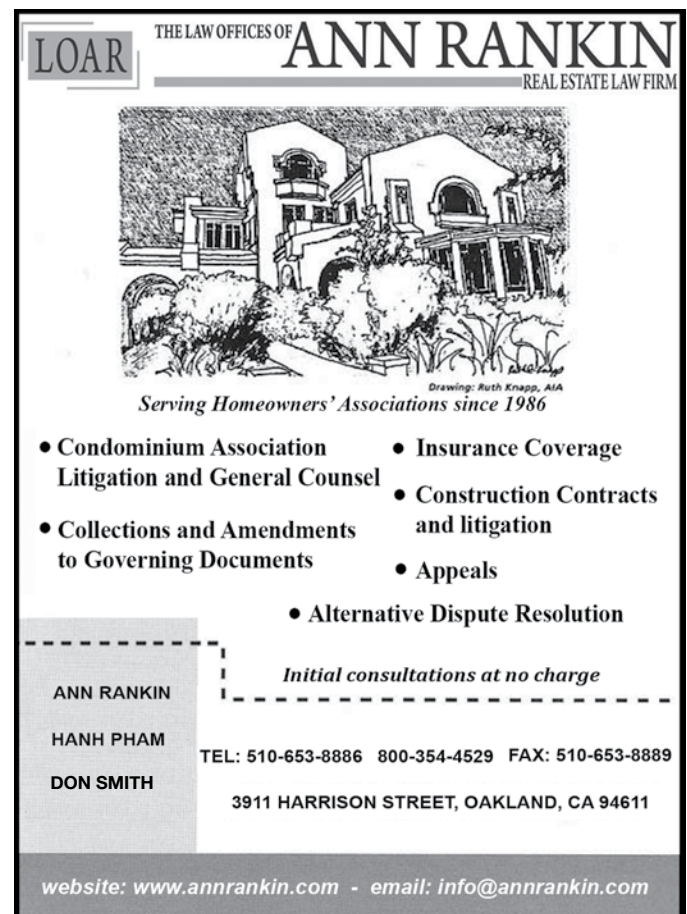
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before a potential customer reaches out to engage. Make sure you are seen as a 'go-to' person within the industry who appears everywhere!

Join and get involved in industry organizations. Paying a membership fee won't help build a strong reputation within your field. Volunteering in some capacity will! Don't sit on the sidelines. While you are building a personal brand, you are also making priceless connections and having a great time supporting your industry.

Get involved in your community. Volunteer to help a local city event. Serve on a committee within your Chamber of Commerce. Join a local Rotary club. These opportunities to serve provide a way to build personal relationships that, in many cases, lead to referrals.

Our industry is growing, and today's market demands professionalism and leadership. Now is the perfect time to build your personal brand and leave a ding in the community management universe!

Emily Yost is the Marketing Director for MPS Financial, LLC in Rancho Santa Margarita.



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