

## **It's All About Exposure**

**Put your Personal Brand into the media, become an "expert," and build business.**

By Peter Montoya

Do independent professionals really know how to promote themselves? It's a provocative question. For most independent professionals, the answer is "no." But it's actually "no" by default, because the opportunities for visibility are unseen.

### **Visibility Outweighs Ability**

Remember one of the maxims of Personal Branding: to the consumer, your visibility is more important than your ability. If a product or service is promoted everywhere, we presume it must be good - if it wasn't good, it wouldn't be promoted everywhere. Similarly, an independent professional who appears constantly to his or her domain must also be a "good" professional of real quality.

### **Exposure Is Everything**

Your Personal Brand, properly positioned to the public in the right Personal Marketing channel, can vault over the indifferently crafted Personal Brands of your competitors. You just have to make the decision to have a public profile - and find a prospect who recognizes your brand's worth.

### **Case Study: Marty Schneider**

Marty Schneider is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER(tm) practitioner with The Advisors Group in San Diego. He turned a chance meeting at his health club into a thriving radio show that boosted his business. While working out one day, Marty met the manager of KPRZ 1210 AM, a local radio station, and they started talking. When the manager discovered Marty's profession, he asked him about doing market reports during news broadcasts. Schneider saw an opportunity to get some valuable exposure, and quickly agreed.

Marty's budding radio career started modestly, with short reports on the NYSE, the NASDAQ and the economy. Soon, those reports grew into a weekend live call-in program - a striking achievement for a man with no prior radio experience.

### **Cross-Promotional Power**

Six years later, Marty conducts a popular 30-minute call-in program - broadcasting from his office Monday through Friday. He purchased his own mobile broadcast system for about \$4,000, but all other program costs have been handled by KPRZ. An engineer screens the calls, and Schneider simply wings it, dispensing financial advice on the fly in a natural, easygoing manner.

Marty's radio program is a great Personal Marketing channel. When answering callers, he gives out some information but suggests that they can get the answers they need by coming to his free seminar, thereby promoting his Personal Brand.

"I try to convert callers to come to my seminars by being a little vague about my answers," he says, "and suggesting that to get the whole picture, they should attend my seminar, which is true, by the way. I have a 90% consultation request rate from my seminars, 80% of those people

actually come in, and 75% of those become clients. So I'm converting about 50% of all my seminar attendees, partially due to the radio program."

### **Very Personal Branding**

Doing a radio call-in show may be impossible or undesirable for many independent professionals, but Marty's success proves some of the fundamental principles of Personal Branding:

- Visibility implies credibility. Callers have no way of knowing if Marty is a good financial advisor, or a mediocre one. But the fact that he's on the air every day for 30 minutes lends him powerful credibility. In a visual context, the same principle applies to direct mail. The more encounters your domain has with your Personal Brand, the more your Personal Brand becomes a brand of consequence.
- Personal contact makes a difference. Marty converts the personal contact from his radio show into more personal contact at his seminars, and his extraordinary conversion rate from prospects to clients shows how Personal Branding translates directly into more sales.
- Cross-promotion works. Marty leverages one Personal Marketing channel - his show - to fuel another, his seminar. In effect, the radio program is a 30-minute ad for his seminar, and it also puts him way ahead of other financial advisors with seminars. After all, how many of them can claim their own radio program?

### **Media Opportunities**

Once you get past the initial Personal Marketing channels - using Personal Postcards and Personal Brochures - you'll want to move into the print, broadcast and online media to increase your visibility and your credibility. Some ideas:

- Contact a local newspaper about writing a column on your industry. If you can't write, don't worry. That's what ghostwriters are for.
- Send an introductory letter and a press kit to editors, pitching yourself as a source for stories about your industry or profession. It's a real coup to get yourself in an editor's Rolodex as an "expert."
- Talk to a local cable access station about hosting a call-in TV show, or better yet, present your expertise with the idea of becoming a special assignment reporter or commentator for a local news station or national cable program.
- Contact a Web site central to your industry about a column or analysis, or even a Web radio talk show, which are becoming more common.
- Talk to your own local radio outlet, as did Marty Schneider, about hosting your own show.

### **Is the Work Worth It?**

Is this work? Yes. However, it can also be fun, and increase your domain exponentially. The media is your biggest ally when it comes to taking your business to the next level. Present yourself not as a beggar looking for a publicity morsel, but as a valued component. If you do, you may get a chance to double or triple your business.