



Intimate

Lesson Two: Branding the Hell out of Yourself

Hello and welcome! You are listening to IttyBiz Intimate Recording number two. My name is Naomi Dunford from IttyBiz.com. Again, if you don't already know that, I'm pretty sure you came by this recording dishonestly. Naughty, naughty.

Today, we're talking about

Branding the Hell out of Yourself [0:22]

which is pretty much my favorite topic ever.

What is branding? Branding is, first and foremost, choosing what you want people to see. Now, a quick definition of terms. Of the three dictionary definitions of the word "manipulation", two are ethically neutral. Basically, the three definitions are:

1. Being a scheming bastard to get what you want;
2. Influencing a situation to get what you want; or
3. Physically shaping something like clay or metal.

Common usage of "manipulate", especially among hippies, turned it into a bad thing. But for the purposes of this lesson, I'm going with ethically-neutral. I'm going with manipulating like you would manipulate clay. The clay doesn't feel bad and the clay doesn't feel good. The clay just gets moved.

For example, when you go into a retail store, almost unequivocally, the stuff they want you to buy is at the front, on your right. Why? Because 90% of people, all other things being equal, turn right. They just do. So, the situation: someone has walked into your store. Your manipulation of that situation: putting the stuff you want them to purchase directly in their path.

Fast-food restaurants use bright colors and uncomfortable seating because they want you out of their establishment as quickly as possible. Or – do you remember that line in Ocean's Eleven where George Clooney comments on the color of the hotel walls, and Brad Pitt says, "They say taupe is very soothing"? That's manipulation. So when I use words like "manipulate" or "engineer" or "control", please keep these definitions and examples in mind.

I would never want you hurting someone to get your own end, and I don't want you to think that I do.

But influencing them? Hell, yeah.

In order to understand and be proficient at branding, you have to understand and be comfortable with this type of manipulation and influence. It's not mean. As we'll discuss, Gary Vaynerchuk's very public desire to buy the New York Jets is classic manipulation. Are you hurt? Are you damaged? Is your life somehow worse because he said that? Absolutely not. But Gary's statement is laced with branding-based manipulation.

But whatever word you want to use, let's get to branding, shall we?

Picking the Box [3:05]

No matter what you do, people will put you in a box. If you brand yourself effectively, you get to pick the box.

The first thing I want to talk about is objectives-based branding. The reason most people have trouble choosing a brand, and subsequently executing it, is that they don't know what it's all in aid of. Objectives-based branding helps you decide what the end goal is before you start. Then you don't end up picking a brand largely at random and then realizing it did absolutely nothing to advance your goals.

If you want to be a best-selling self-help author, you're not going to get there by being the guy who's always helping individuals, always answering his own email, getting really in-depth with people one by one by one. You're just not going to sell a hundred thousand books that way. You're going to need to be a little aloof, maybe a little distant. You're going to have to network with your peers and your colleagues, and you're going to need to really focus on being seen as an expert, not necessarily a nice guy.

If you want to work one-on-one with as many people as you possibly can, and you're willing to take a substantial pay cut in order to do so, you're going to

have to be accessible. You're going to have to be the guy who helps the little guy. You're definitely going to answer your own email.

See the difference?

Now, if you're having trouble with the word "objective", change it up a bit. Consider your fantasy life. I'm talking the stuff you fantasize about when nobody's listening. The stuff that, while you're not ashamed of it, you're not exactly waving a placard about it. These are things like:

- You want to be on the New York Times Bestseller list.
- You want to own a yacht.
- You want to only make \$30k a year and hide out on an island somewhere.
- You want to only coach 1-on-1 even though the experts say that's stupid.
- You never want to coach 1-on-1 but still want to call yourself a coach.

Those kind of fantasies that you have that would be really perfect objectives. Those would be great end goals. For example, a lot of coaches in the public eye have trouble deciding what they're doing with their blog. Are they trying to get a whole bunch of fans and potential customers? Are they trying to *just* get potential customers? Are they trying to get the respect of their peers? It's a difficult question, because each outcome requires its own separate path.

Your potential customers are, when it comes to your topic, essentially newbies. They want bite-sized tips. They want tactics. They generally want the really easy stuff. In my case, these are the people who would love a post giving fifty potential awesome email subject lines. For these people, tactical equals good.

Your peers, on the other hand, won't not respect you for writing about Fifty Best-Selling Subject Lines, but let's face it: they already know all of this. There's nothing there to make them sit up and take notice of you. You get the respect of your peers by moving your industry forward. This is the high-concept stuff, the analytical stuff, the stuff that doesn't really have a point. It's often very procedural: talking about how you deal with clients, industry trends, that kind of thing.

Those are very different animals, and if you know what your objective is – essen-

tially, this is the old “money vs. fame?” question – it’s a lot easier to target your branding elements appropriately. As an aside, if your answer is “both” on the “peers vs. newbies” thing, and you want the respect of the newbies *and* your colleagues, we’ll have a solution for that in the tactics segment at the end.

This brings us to your first assignment. Pencils at the ready.

(The assignment is on the next page.)

Assignment: Setting Objectives [7:50]

This assignment is to define your primary objective or end goal. There are usually two types of people faced with this question. One, they have absolutely no idea. You ask them what their objective is, and they say something like, “Um, I want to be happy?” Life coaches, I’m talking to you. The other group has known their objective since they were in the womb. They have written this stuff down in goals exercises every day since they were 15. Man, they know. They are solid. Business coaches, I’m talking to you.

I want you to come up with five possible objectives – or fantasies, if that’s easier to wrap your head around.

Those of you in the first camp: writing down five will help you narrow your focus and see what really appeals to you. For many people, especially in the early stages of coaching, it feels like the goal is just “to make enough money”, or “to help people”, and those aren’t really concrete enough and they can’t really help you define a brand. This can help with the more specific parts of it.

Those of you in the second camp: writing down those four additional possible objectives will help you make sure that you’re not wearing blinders, and to make sure you’re not just saying what your goal has always been because it’s what you’ve always said.

When you’ve done that, you can start finding a brand that advances your objectives and your fantasies.

Objective 1: _____

Objective 2: _____

Objective 3: _____

Objective 4: _____

Objective 5: _____

The Four Branding Elements [9:40]

Or, How to Become a Superhero

Next, we're going to talk about your four branding elements. If you happen to be writing a novel, and the protagonist of your novel is a superhero, this would also be a very good way to go about creating that character.

A solid brand contains four elements: a core strength, a weakness, a peccadillo, and a talisman. This is me pausing so you can write that down.

Your **strength** is the core of what you do. From our last lesson, it's The Thing You Do. It's your freaky Thing. It's pretty much what we talked about in The Thing You Do. We're not going to go into a lot of depth on it today. You don't have to decide on it today. You're still letting it process, but you have a good idea of what it's going to be, or at least what kind of thing it's going to be. An example, in my case, could be, "I help entrepreneurs who are scrappy bootstrappers in the early stages of their business or the early stages of their growth grow really fast and make lots of money with very little investment." I am not the one to come to when you want a crazy ad campaign in the *New York Times*. That's not me. I help you create branding without buying ads, without all of the expensive stuff. That would be an example of mine. Not exactly as succinct as it would be if I were writing this down, but that's the idea.

Next up is the **weakness**. I would say that the weakness is the most important thing – your most important branding element – and I would also say that it is the one that the vast majority of people screw up. Your weakness is the thing that you deliberately and consciously do wrong. Ideally, it's some kind of vice. I swear. I like blackjack. But it could be as simple as loving Dan Brown, or talking about your propensity for speeding tickets. Basically, you want to choose something that is true but that makes you appear weak.

With your weakness, you're doing two things. One, you're taking yourself off the pedestal. You're being one of us. You're showing us that you are one of the good guys. This, again, is a very common practice in fiction and screenwriting. We can't love a character that doesn't have flaws. The other thing you're doing is picking your weakness. If you don't choose one and make it loud, your audience

will choose it for you.

A great side story here: Jack is just starting to get into the age group where he's really interested in what Jamie is doing – Jack being my son who is currently 4, and Jamie being my husband. And up until recently, Jack was definitely in the Mama's Boy years, and now he's starting to get really interested in Daddy. And one of the things that Jamie has done that has made Jack absolutely entranced by him is when we go to the nanny's house, we park on the street, and at one point Jamie parked and did his thing, and came back downstairs to a ticket on his windshield, and he's going, "What did I get a ticket for?" And it turns out he got a ticket for parking in the wrong direction. I guess if you park on X side of the street, your car is supposed to be facing *this* way, and he was parking the wrong way. And it was a \$40 ticket or something, but in talking to Jack about it, this is the coolest thing that has ever happened, ever. He is absolutely enchanted with the fact that Daddy got a ticket. He doesn't think he should get another one. It's not like he's going, "Ooh, get another ticket, Daddy!" At the same time, he's also not against it. He's not the Morality Police about it. He's just saying, "Ooh, that's cool."

We are absolutely entranced by vice.

The next thing you want to have is a **peccadillo**. A peccadillo is basically a little weirdness. It's that thing about you that's really weird. This is the thing that you do that is deliberately not in keeping with your brand. For me, it's romance novels and country music. It would be expected of someone with my brand to ride a motorcycle, because the brand is kind of badass. So you take something like country music or trashy romance, and people look, and it makes them go, "huh?" People freak out when I say I love Toby Keith. I always get emails when it comes up. People just can't get their head around it.

Your peccadillo is the thing that makes you multidimensional. It's the thing that keeps people surprised. And having a peccadillo makes you look very, very honest. In this case we're talking about honesty not as opposed to dishonesty, but honesty as opposed to fake, maybe, or too shiny and professional. If you're on-brand all the time, you look like you're trying to fool people, because nobody fits perfectly in a box. So when you open up yourself and say, "here's the thing that's

really weird about me,” it puts people at ease, and it helps you because they don’t start looking for it. They don’t start looking for cracks in the façade, because it’s not really a façade. “This is a really weird thing about me. Now you don’t have to look for something, because here it is. I’m handing it to you.”

Another peccadillo in my industry is Sonia Simone, the editor for Copyblogger: she has pink hair. She is a 40-something woman, fairly straight-laced online persona, mother of a young child, bit of a hippie, but kind of a granola hippie, not a punk-rock hippie. But her hair? Pink. Why? Peccadilloes. Something a little bit weird.

The fourth branding element is the **talisman**. The talisman is the thing that takes the focus off you a little bit. Imagine if you didn’t have a talisman – and we’ll get into a little bit more detail about what it is. Your whole brand is about your strengths, your weaknesses, your peccadilloes – you, you, you. You end up looking really self-absorbed. All about your strength, your weakness, your peccadillo – all of that makes you look a bit like a narcissistic jerkface.

Basically, a talisman is a thing. It’s an object. Maybe it’s a loosely-defined and metaphorical object; maybe it’s an actual object. But it’s something that exists outside yourself that is still a part of your brand. Chris Guillebeau, from the *Art of Non-Conformity*, talks about his assistant Libby. He links to a photograph of her every time she comes up in conversation, which is quite frequently. Libby is a cat. That’s a talisman.

Let’s look at Gary Vaynerchuk’s talisman: the New York Jets. He wants to buy them. He talks about it all the time. This is perfect for a few reasons. One, it’s polarizing. Some people think he is out of his mind for even *liking* the Jets. Some people agree with him and go, “Oh my God, Gary’s just like me! I love the Jets too!” Everyone thinks he’s out of his mind for seriously wanting to buy a professional football team.

Now, that would be beautiful if the Jets were a completely neutral thing – if they were a neutral talisman. They didn’t do anything for or against him, they just added some dimension. But in this case, it’s a beautifully-*branded* talisman, because wanting to buy the New York Jets is such a Gary thing to do. It shows

he's confident and optimistic and manly; it shows he has a lot of money; it shows he's the everyman. Let's face it: it's not like he wants to buy Bank of America. He wants to buy a very blue-collar football team. It shows who he is.

Now, not everybody can find a talisman that perfect – well, I think we all *can*; whether or not we all *do*, that's another story for another time. But it's a great example of – that's the kind of perfect. Chris Guillebeau was also another good example. He has come out and said he *wants* to answer his own email; he wants to be in touch with his fans. He's a very high-touch brand. So the idea of playfully talking about his assistant shows that he's playful, shows that he likes cats. It shows that he's domestic. It shows that he's gentle. Using that talisman, using that external object, as a way to reinforce your brand further: brilliant.

If you know of these online personas – I suppose they're both actual grown-up authors now, with books on paper – but if you know of these personas, imagine if you switched them. Imagine Gary had the cat and Chris had the Jets. You'd be dealing with two very different brands. And that is beautiful execution of the talisman.

Now, your next assignment. (I just leaned into the mike for that. I guess it's extra important.)

Assignment: The Elements of Branding [21:30]

What I want from you is one of each of the branding elements except Strength, because we did that in *The Thing You Do*. So I want a weakness, a peccadillo, and a talisman. I want you to tell me what it is, and I want you to give me a paragraph or so about why you think it works. Ideally, each of these should be ones you're fairly attached to, and if not committed to, then theoretically willing to commit to.

In addition to that, I want four perfectly reasonable alternatives to each. You don't have to flesh these out; just give me chapter headings. If you were me doing this exercise, you would use the swearing as your primary weakness, flesh that out a little bit, and then for the next four, you would use blackjack, a fondness of Jack Daniels, a Hermes scarf addiction, and smoking. You don't have to get into

it, but a few other examples, so that basically, if your first one is wrong, you have backup. Also, the more you move forward, it's not a bad idea to weave in a few weaknesses, for example. It's not unreasonable to have more than one talisman. It's easy for somebody who doesn't totally get branding to just pick one of each, but as you move forward, you'll want to have a more multifaceted brand.

Now, the things you list have to be elements – a weakness, a peccadillo, or a talisman – that you are going to be consciously choosing, but it has to be legitimate. Don't lie and say you are obsessed with Texas Hold'Em when you don't know how to shuffle a deck of cards. That's for the pros. If you're going to start faking stuff about yourself for your brand, you've gotta be damn good. This is also something that you're not just willing to go public with, but you're kind of a little excited to go public with. Pick something that you like that you're not ashamed of, because you're going to be talking about it a lot. Okay? When I say that, I don't mean that you're going to give it ten blog posts a week, but you're going to refer back to it. It's going to be a consistent part of your brand. It's not something that you can just say once and forget it ever happened.

Weaknesses

Primary: _____
Description: _____

Secondary: _____
Secondary: _____
Secondary: _____
Secondary: _____

Peccadilloes

Primary: _____
Description: _____

Secondary: _____
Secondary: _____
Secondary: _____
Secondary: _____

Talismans

Primary: _____
 Description: _____

 Secondary: _____
 Secondary: _____
 Secondary: _____
 Secondary: _____

Branding Tactics [24:20]

I want to move into the tactics part of the call, to give you some ideas of what you can be doing as well. First, the **200% Branding Solution**. Kind of sounds like something that comes in a bottle. A lot of people come to me with questions about branding, and exactly how to put their brand forward – exactly what they should do. Basically, what you’re doing is taking these aspects that are already a part of you, and you’re amplifying them about 200%. So if in your normal life, you find yourself talking about how much you love Dan Brown about once a week, you’ll want to do it twice.

What you’re doing here is becoming a little larger than life, but not so much so that you’re becoming a caricature. I swear on my blog – well, I don’t swear more than I swear in regular life, but I’m much more pointed about it. I make a point of it. Anybody who’s talked to me on the phone or in person knows that my actual swearing is probably more than I swear on the blog, but it’s not nearly as interesting.

The next thing I want to talk about is branding elements as they apply to your **creatives**. When we talk “creatives”, we mean things like advertising copy, logos, photographs, stuff like that. Okay? A lot of people think that a brand is a logo, is ad copy, is a slogan, is a tagline, is a combination of colors, is a logotype – and those can be inter-related, but for an ittybiz-sized business, it’s not important. **You officially have permission from me to just bail on the branding aspects of about 90% of that.**

It would be smart for you to be conscious if you're taking an irreverent brand. If you're me, you don't want the layout of your site to look very, very serious. You don't want your business cards to be very, very serious. It would just look weird and jarring. It would be disconcerting for people. So you want to keep mindful of the tone that you're presenting. But beyond that, don't worry too much about it.

The key with branding and creatives is **consistency**. Essentially, get a logo and keep it. You're allowed to make a switch at some point, but don't keep screwing around. Get a set of colors and keep it. That way when you get a redesign of your website, or your flyers, or your in-person studio, you can kind of keep the same elements in place. Your copywriting – if you're jokey and fun on your services page, be jokey and fun on your about page. For these elements of branding, all you really need to do is keep them consistent. Ask yourself if it makes sense for someone with your brand. You're smart. You have been shopping for a very long time. You know more about branding than you realize you know. So if you just ask yourself, "Is this reasonable?" it probably is.

This is especially true when it comes to things like colors. If you think to yourself, "Yes, it would be perfectly reasonable to have blue as my color," then make blue your color. It doesn't matter. There's a lot of really high-level advertising and marketing advice when it comes to things like what colors make people feel, and it's true: hot pink, sunshine yellow, Tiffany blue – they're going to give very different feelings to people. But I think as long as you're not really, really brash, and really in their face, it doesn't matter too much.

However, when it comes to **your photograph**, you are one coach. You will either always be one coach, or you'll be leading a coaching organization. You are the face. Show your face. When it comes to your photographs, get a pro. Get professional headshots. Get lots of pictures. Pay extra for a very long photo shoot. Bring lots of different outfits. Get lots of pictures. Look at them yourself, bring them to your friends and family – I generally don't recommend spouses unless your spouse is very objective, and I almost never recommend a parent – show them around a bit. Advise people that you're asking for their opinion and that you have absolutely no plans to listen to it so that you don't worry about, "Well, Suzy, my best friend, really loved photo #4, but that was my least favorite," and you don't have to get into any drama. But just get the buzz; get the feeling of what's

going on.

Pick a photo that's very, very branded. Pick something that drops down to thumbnail size very easily, because you're going to want to use this across your Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, the About page on your blog – when other people interview you, they're going to want a photograph. Pay attention to this, because if you can keep consistently-branded photographs across the internet, it gives huge benefits.

One more thing that I want to mention about photographs. When you're choosing your photo, make sure you choose something that makes you a little bit uncomfortable. Not hugely uncomfortable – you don't have to be naked – but for people who haven't spent their whole lives thinking about branding, they usually tend to err on the side of tame and safe. So whatever it is – whatever brand you chose – see if you can push the envelope a little bit on that.

The next tactic I want to talk about is the **3-to-1** ratio. This harkens back to what we were talking about earlier with regard to getting the respect of your peers vs. the respect of your newbies. You'll never be a “big deal” – and I'm putting air quotes firmly in place there – if you only have the respect of your right people. You can have huge numbers of newbies thinking you're great, and that's not going to do you much in certain goals. For certain objectives, that's not going to do it. You'll never make any money if you only have the respect of your peers and colleagues. If everybody in your industry thinks you're fantastic, but you don't do any of the stuff for the newbies to help them come in the door, the game is pretty much over for you.

You want to combine your expertise in a way that garners the respect of both. You want to target your branding in that direction as well. My recommendation here is – and I'm not saying you have to get out a spreadsheet for this – you want about a three-to-one ratio. About three things for the newbies for every one high-concept thing. Keep in mind that your peers and your colleagues are probably very involved in your industry, and as such don't have time to read every word you and everyone else writes. So let's say, if you do three newsletters, or three blog posts, or three podcasts, or three radio shows, make them for the newbies and add one for your peers. One that's a little bit higher-concept, one that takes a

higher-level approach.

Another quick thought: **your talisman might not be a bad logo**. Now, if your talisman is your obsession with *Oprah Magazine*, maybe not; you probably can't put that in your logo. But it's worth thinking about.

Another tactic I want to talk about – and I could talk about this for hours, so I will try to keep this deliberately short – is **branded guerrilla marketing**. Guerrilla marketing is a funny phrase because when it first came out, it was very on buzz; it was definitely what people in IttyBiz-style communities were talking about. Nowadays I think it's been used so much – and I think in a world with social media in it – guerrilla marketing is almost all the marketing. Basically, unless you're running ads, it's some kind of guerrilla marketing. But I wanted to talk a little bit about using your branding as a tactic through your guerrilla marketing initiatives.

What I'm talking about here is things like when you're sending out email newsletters, or when you're sending coupon codes out of the blue, or when you send your commentators to a special web page – those kind of things. Your upsells in a signature line. All those little tactics. Whenever you embark on a little project like that one, consider how your brand impacts it, and a little bit how it impacts your brand. If you have a brand that – we'll use swearing, because we always do – if you swear, swear. If you are a blackjack junkie, use gambling or Las Vegas metaphors or allusions. I at one point made a joke about a sale that I was having and said that the proceeds were going into my boob job fund. That's the kind of thing that I would say. And those kind of comments tend to break down barriers. It makes people a little bit more comfortable. They're reading a sales email, after all.

Do what you can with your branding to make it a little bit safer for them, to make it a little bit more accessible. Because if they've opted in, literally or proverbially, whether they've done the Aweber double opt-in email newsletter path or whether they've just decided to read your blog, they're already on board with your brand. They like your brand. If they didn't like your brand, they'd leave. There are plenty of other people in the world who do something similar to what you do. So they like it. With your fans, you can push the envelope a little harder. You can hit them

over the head with your brand a little bit. So see what you can do, and think about each of your – even the littlest things: the emails that you send, your tweets, your Twitter background, your Facebook updates. All of those little things – just think about them from a branding standpoint. Because once you start thinking about branding, it becomes so much easier.

Now, the big final question. [36:10]

The biggest question that you want to ask yourself when you're making business decisions – as they respect to branding, of course – is not “Will this contribute to my brand?” **The biggest question to ask yourself is “Will it detract from my brand?”** This is a nice, safe way for non-branding geeks to get into the mindset. Doing something that detracts from your brand can be pretty much disastrous. But doing something that doesn't necessarily contribute, something fairly neutral – it doesn't make your brand suffer, and you're probably okay.

One of the great things about branding is that it only takes a few brush strokes to really, really change your image. A few key changes, a few strategic tweaks, can completely change your brand. So if you find yourself in a place where you made a few decisions, you made a few moves that aren't really onto your brand, but they're not hurting it, you can just beef it up. You can go and you can quote some of those weaknesses, and play around with your talisman, and make jokes about your peccadilloes, and you can do those and you can bring your brand back very easily. It's very safe.

So remember: the question to ask is not necessarily, “Oh crap, what should I do to make sure it contributes?” Just make sure it doesn't detract and you'll be okay.

That's it! We're done here for today. You've got your two assignments; you've got some hacks; you're ready to get to work.

You have been listening to IttyBiz Intimate Lesson Two: Branding the Hell out of Yourself. My name is Naomi Dunford from IttyBiz.com, and I will talk to you very, very soon.