



Hardwood Manufacturers Association

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The Power of Personal Branding

By Landy Chase, MBA, CSP

You are familiar with the old sales adage “people buy from people they know”. That fact is one aspect of professional selling that has not changed, and will not in the future. However, in today’s marketplace, the term “know” can mean many things, as there are different levels of “know”. A better choice of words might be this: “people buy from people with whom they are familiar.”

While we are at it, it would be worth a moment to consider *why* people like to buy from people with whom they are familiar. The reason is simple: in a world of choices, **the more familiar that you are to your prospective buyer, the less the perception of risk in doing business with you**; which is why sales people in the Selling Revolution must harness the power of social media to build a personal brand.

In the new economy, buyers place a premium on useful advice. To take that idea a step further, it is important to note that advice from a known entity – specifically, a trusted authority – is of much greater interest, and given much higher credence, than information from an unknown one, because in the unknown case, the source of the expertise has not been validated. In other words, the recipient perceives the known-advisory source as being low-risk based on a past positive experience with that advice provider.

This is the power of branding. It was the case in the traditional marketing model, and it is a key point that carries over to the online one, as well. The logical conclusion is that sales people need to become a known entity to the prospects within their market.

The dictionary defines **brand** as “a kind or variety of something distinguished by some distinctive characteristic”. Remember that you are a marketer first, a sales person, second. As a marketer, you can, and must, distinguish yourself as a provider of consistently good advice. Social media marketing provides you with the power to build your reputation – your brand – as an expert within your field of business.

The primary value of establishing your personal brand is what is referred to in the advertising business as TOMA. TOMA, as you may already know, stands for Top of Mind Awareness. Think of TOMA as your personal ‘street creed.’ It represents the degree of significance with which you are regarded by those within your Sphere of Influence. In social media networking, TOMA – your degree of significance – is determined by two factors:

- The quality of the information (advice) that you provide to your sphere of influence, and
- The frequency with which you provide it, which determines how often you are top-of-mind.

Therefore, you must provide quality information to your Sphere, and you must do so on a regular basis, to build both ‘street creed’ and familiarity. Social media provides you with the power to establish both.

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