How To BUILD A Great BRAND ...

YOUR OWN!

As financial marketers we spend a lot of time thinking about brands. We fret about the cohesiveness of our corporate brand, our social media voice and our crisis management position. Yet there is one brand we sometimes overlook, a brand that needs to be nurtured and developed by every banking professional—our personal brand.

A lot of statistics get thrown around about how today's younger workers will experience more job shifts in their lifetime than their predecessors. While there is debate about that number, what is certain is that reinvention is a way of life, whether through internal corporate changes or changing firms. To prosper in such an environment demands a clear understanding of what you stand for and the message you are trying to deliver. In other words, your brand.

"Start with defining who you are and what you have to say that is powerful and uniquely you, that is, your unique selling proposition."

To address this topic, the New England Financial Marketing Association asked brand specialist and "Career Reinventionist" Joyce Sullivan to develop a set of principles that bankers may use to develop and promote their unique brand voice.

The principles Sullivan applies will be familiar to any marketer, as they reflect the strategy process that goes into any well-conceived brand effort. It starts with defining who you are and what you have to say that is powerful and uniquely you, that is, your unique selling proposition. It continues with a thorough consideration of your target audience—who are you trying to reach? It concludes, as does every good marketing effort, with defining an action plan for after a connection is made. That is, how will the experience of the interaction line up with the promise of the "campaign" outreach and how will success be defined?

For Sullivan, the means of approach has changed over time, as "social media is the new telephone," yet the objective of personal brand outreach remains unchanged—it is a personal one-to-one experience with a potential employer. That personal interaction is not the one-off interview of the past, however. It is a long-term series of interactions that allows an individual to define and develop their personal brand profile using a range of strategic tools.

Sullivan stresses using personal networks and industry group connections to build a unique brand. This is achieved through three key principles, what Sullivan calls the "Three Be's:" Be Visible, Be Listening and Be Generous. Of particular note is her philosophy of being generous with time and empathy. We all know that a small minority of the people do the majority of work in any volunteer setting. By giving unstintingly, without worrying about "when is it my turn?" the banking professional can build a powerful brand as a doer and force for change. While job opportunities may not be immediate, with patience, career opportunities are sure to follow. ■