



Finding Your “Big Idea”

By Catherine Kaputa

Savvy brand managers spend a lot of time delineating differences: different product benefits, different look, different message, and different target audience. What they are creating is a distinct brand strategy explaining what their brand has to offer that competing brands don't. And the payback can be enormous.

Look at high profile entrepreneurs who hit the big time like Donald Trump or Martha Stewart. They built a compelling brand idea or USP (unique selling proposition) for themselves and their business idea every step of the way. No matter what you do, you should do the same.

Branding is about finding your big idea – your unique selling proposition – that something special that sets you and your business apart from others and helps you to be more successful.

In my book, *You Are a Brand!*, winner of the Ben Franklin Award for Best Career Book 2007, I outline the strategies and actions that people in all types of careers can do to propel business success and build a personal and business brand identity.

Let's look at one of them, Alexandra, an executive coach who had been in business for more than ten years. Alexandra had a marketing brochure and fancy logo but no different idea. After I read her brochure, all I could remember as a takeaway message was “executive coach who works with all kinds of people and all kinds of



problems.”

A lot of business people make this mistake. They want to cast a wide net so they won't miss any business. However, the opposite usually occurs. They don't get much business because people don't have anything to sink their teeth into. Alexandra offered no reason for someone to choose her and gave no sense of the kind of clients she was best suited to help.

We got our brand insight when I asked Alexandra, “What kind of client are you really good with?”

“Believe it or not,” Alexandra told me, “I like working with really difficult people – managers with poor people skills, the kind that are featured in books like *How to Work for a Jerk*.”

Eureka! We had our different brand promise.

With her focus on difficult managers and the people who work for them, Alexandra had a point of difference and a USP on which to build her self brand and company brand. She had a public relations platform for pitching reporters doing stories on how to cope with an abusive boss or a difficult client.

Alexandra's different brand strategy also became a way of being memorable and staying at the top of everyone's mind. And as we know, out of mind is out of business if you are an entrepreneur.