

The Critical Element That's Missing From Your Marketing

Solo and small business owners often mistake being impersonal and stiff for being "professional." Inflating your business size and using corporate speak to appear legitimate and credible can backfire by destroying the small business owner's biggest advantage - personality and the personal touch. Learn how you can leverage these two advantages in your marketing, starting with your website's About page.

You've just launched your own business. Congratulations! You finally get to make all the decisions and to do things "your way." But, as Peter Parker's Uncle Ben told him, "With great power comes great responsibility." Now that you're responsible for absolutely every aspect of your new business, from invoicing clients to ordering staples, it's time to look at where your best intentions might actually be hurting your business.

As small business owners or solo entrepreneurs, we desperately want to appear legitimate and credible to prospects and clients. Our voice mail message assures callers "we can't take your call right now, but your call is important to us." We inflate the number of staffers we have. (One company that I worked for briefly took this façade to the extreme; giving non-existent staffers fake names, fake signatures and fake voice mail greetings.) We use verbose, staid, corporate language in our websites and brochures.

We desperately want to be seen as "professional" by our clients. The paradox is that the harder we try to look bigger and professional, the more that we lose our biggest advantage as a small business: personality and the personal touch. Instead, we look like corporate clones – personality-free. The truth is that your prospects and clients actually choose you because you're not big and corporate. They're seeking a credible, personable solution to their problem.

Look at your website, brochures and newsletters with a critical eye. Are they filled with references to "the team," "our staff," and phrases like "at xyz, every employee strives to ensure customer satisfaction..?"

That's not what makes clients choose your company. They choose you. Don't hide your personality, your particular life's experience. Don't hide your you-ness.



How can you infuse more of YOU into your marketing?

Start with your website's About page.

Chances are, it's one of the most popular pages on your website. (Really, go check your stats or ask your web person.) Why? Because visitors – potential clients – want to know about your company. Most of all, they want to know who's behind it. They want to know about you.

And not some glossy, polished, perfect version. Your prospects want to relate to you and to feel assured that you understand the struggles they're facing.

So do that. Share your personality, your imperfections, your passions, the challenges you've faced and overcome. When prospects read your compelling story, they will be more likely to buy from you. Because you stand out. Because you're like them – imperfect.

Juice up your website's About page by weaving the answers to these questions into the narrative.

How did you become a [financial advisor, photographer, management consultant, life coach]?

What was the defining moment in your life that led you to start your business?

Why do you continue doing what you do?

What are your other passions?

What drives you?

By sharing your personality, your story and your passions (starting with your website), you give your prospects ways to connect with you and your business on an emotional level. And that's an advantage that big businesses can't begin to compete with.



Lori Nash Byron

is the founder of *FamousinYourField.com*, a consulting and training company for professionals and solo entrepreneurs, who want to build a powerful brand, attract more clients and position themselves as experts in their industries through speaking, publishing and publicity.