Gary Vaynerchuk and 8 Business Moguls Reveal Their Secrets for Building an Unstoppable Brand

Building a brand is more important than ever. The masters reveal here how to do it well.

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Today, the world has more small businesses and “wannapreneurs” than ever. Anyone with a mobile phone can launch an Instagram page and claim they are a brand. There’s more noise than there’s ever been, and no time in history where it’s harder to stand out. Which is why building a recognizable and respected brand is so critical today if you want to succeed.

We asked Gary Vaynerchuk and eight other master brand builders and Advisors in The Oracles for their best advice on the topic. Here’s what they said.

1. Create valuable content that is uniquely you.

Gary Vaynerchuk

Image credit: The Oracles

You don’t want to be in the business of selling; you want people to come to you. Your personal or company brand is what

makes that happen, which is why it’s the single most important asset in your business. To build a strong brand, create content that brings value to your customers. The intention behind the content is imperative. If you’re creating it just to sell something, people will instinctively know.

Don’t worry about being perfect. Just be yourself. Focus on becoming the voice of your industry and helping your clients. Listen to their problems and address them. Then amplify your content with ads. You probably won’t be able to directly monetize it immediately, and that’s OK. You’re building a brand. And remember: It’s not about likes or followers — it’s about business results. ***—Gary Vaynerchuk, founder and CEO of VaynerX; five-time New York Times bestselling author of “Crushing It!”***

2. Tell a story.

Kara Goldin

Image credit: The Oracles

Start by solving a problem. If it’s personal to you, even better. Storytelling is also key. Share your story in a way that others can relate to. Ensure you’re driven by passion and purpose and that your mission is clear, then stick to that mission no matter what. You also have to be ready to work really hard, no matter how good your idea is or how easy it looks. Results won’t come instantly and will probably take longer than you think. Stick with it. ***—Kara Goldin, founder and CEO of Hint Inc.; creator of The Kara Network, a digital resource for entrepreneurs; and host of the “Unstoppable” podcast; follow Kara on Twitter and Instagram***

3. Get customers first.

Matt Clark

Image credit: The Oracles

Don’t spend much time planning the perfect brand. Instead, first, start selling and building a customer base. Talk with your customers, even if it’s just via email or surveys, to find out what they like, what they don’t, and why they bought from you. Then adjust your branding and messaging to resonate with others like them.

For example, take one of our members, Devin Dorosh, whose brand just made the Inc. 5000 list. When he started Grillaholics, he didn’t go through a massive branding exercise. Instead, he launched a product, made sales, and created his brand organically as he learned about his customers. Selling more to your existing customers is the best way to grow sales. So before you launch a new product, ask yourself whether your current customers will buy it. If not, create a different one. ***—Matt Clark, co-founder and chairman of Amazing.com and co-creator of Amazing Selling Machine; connect with Matt on Instagram***

4. Solve a problem.

Jose Zuniga

Image credit: The Oracles

To build a sustainable, long-term business, you must see your customer as your most valuable asset, not your bottom line.

When you switch your focus from increasing profit margins (taking) to providing value to your customers (giving), they will want to continue buying from you. Your worth is directly proportional to the value you provide, whether that's through information that improves their lives or products that solve a problem. To earn more from your personal or consumer brand, you must be more valuable. At its core, business is simple: identify a problem and offer a solution. That's what people are willing to give up their hard-earned money for.

To be successful, you must do what others aren't willing to. Stop wasting hours on Netflix, swiping on Instagram, and partying every weekend, which won't yield a positive return on the time you're investing. Spend your time thinking about how to become more valuable, and you'll start earning more. ***—Jose Zuniga, the 24-year-old co-founder of ESNTLS men's fashion empire; watch Jose's YouTube video or follow him on Instagram***

5. Invest in your business.

Patch Baker

Image credit: The Oracles

Branding is about getting people to follow you and tell all their friends about you. To make that happen, you have to spend money on marketing. However, the best way to spend that money varies, because building a brand doesn't mean advertising everywhere as Coca-Cola and Nike do. It's not "one size fits all." For example, if you're creating a personal brand, you need public relations. A nonprofit needs sponsorships, and products need Facebook, Google, and YouTube advertising.

Building a respected brand is how you create a profitable and

sustainable business, but it requires investing back into your business. If you're in it for the long term, don't buy your dream home or car as soon as you make a profit. Reinvest those profits into building your dream business. You'll see greater returns sooner, which you can use to more easily buy an even better house later. ***—Patch Baker, founder and CEO of Mobius Media Solutions; former U.S. Marine, with a mission to help people leave the military today and not feel abandoned tomorrow***

6. Fulfill your promise.

Michelle Luchese

Image credit: The Oracles

Branding is about selling "the feeling" — for example, placing your product in a specific way in a photo that makes your customers want to be the person in the picture. That starts with finding your voice. Who is your brand persona, and what do they sound like? Don't be afraid to be different. Manly Bands is for guys who want to get excited about finding the right wedding band, even if they don't show it.

You also must consistently fulfill your brand promise and connect with your customers. For us, it was important to give reverence to the process of buying a wedding ring because that was not the experience we had. Invest time and money in customer service, and your customers will tell you what is and isn't working. I still regularly review our customer service emails to see what people are saying or asking. That's how you stay tuned in! ***—Michelle Luchese, co-founder and chief product officer of wedding band company Manly Bands; connect with Michelle on LinkedIn***

7. Become an expert.

Matt Schuldt

Image credit: The Oracles

You can turn a fledgling brand into a multimillion-dollar one if you strategically build a reputation as an expert in your field. Start by offering to consult for high-performing companies that could use your skills in exchange for shares in the company. Their track record is yours, and your time is valuable; so only work with the best.

To grow your reputation, consistently interact with your social media followers, and create free content with value they can instantly use. Leverage trends to position yourself as an authority in your niche. For example, create a YouTube video analyzing trends or comment on other leaders' LinkedIn articles. Dedicate at least one day a week to your shareholdings, and share their progress with your community. That's how we created an eight-figure branding business with equity in other companies in just two years. ***—Matt Schuldt, co-founder of personal branding agency TPA Media Group; owner of five multimillion-dollar companies; connect with Matt on Instagram and LinkedIn***

8. Live your brand every day.

Dennis Najjar

Image credit: The Oracles

After 15 years in business, we've finally found ourselves at

the point where our brand is instantly recognizable by a large segment of our target clients. Leading by example was one of the key elements that got us here and made our brand so ironclad. Everyone in our company is part of our brand, so we spend a lot of time ensuring they experience our authentic identity — and believe in it. The best way to create your brand is to believe in it and make sure everyone on your team lives and breathes it daily. When you do that, your brand will be invincible. ***—Dennis Najjar, co-founder of AccountingDepartment.com, a virtual accounting service for small businesses; connect with Dennis on LinkedIn***

9. Focus on doing good work.

Judd Rosenblatt

Image credit: The Oracles

Whatever you do, do it really well. Before my company even settled on a name, we focused on producing quality work and making our clients happy. Doing good work is good for your professional pride and your business because satisfied customers will keep coming back and refer others. Having loyal advocates who back you is critical to establishing a powerful brand.

Next, identify what makes you stand out. The internet commodifies everything, so you must communicate how you're different from others. For example, we're passionate about increasing human agency and empowering people through technology. At first, this was just a common mission we shared that was part of how we do business. Eventually, we realized that this is exactly what makes us different and is fundamental to how we produce good results. When we incorporated this into our brand, people found it very

compelling and genuine. That authenticity is key to establishing a successful brand. ***—Judd Rosenblatt, founder and CEO of AE Studio, an Agile web development and data science company dedicated to increasing human agency; connect with Judd on LinkedIn***

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