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SPOTLIGHT ON CONSULTING ISSUES: Consulting Psychologists And Brand Identity *Bernie Luskin, Ed.D.*

Brand Is the Emerging Concept in Consulting Psychology

In today's world, brand awareness is important for all professionals and all organizations. Branding is an operating feature that may be the key to a successful practice as a consulting psychologist.

Clients need to see that the consulting psychologist they have selected is making significant contributions. With increasing frequency, psychologists are recognizing that their reputations, i.e., their "brands" are important. Reputation and brand are intertwined and inseparable. Branding is an intangible but valuable asset for consulting psychologists in the same way that branding, in recent years, has become an asset for physicians in specialties ranging from hair transplants and all forms of plastic surgery to dermatology and other medical specialties.



Lawyers do it. Physicians do it. Even high profile educators do it.....and you should do it too.

Build your brand identity

Here are seven common fundamentals in the creation of a successful brand strategy and campaign. They include:

- Identifying needs held to be significant among a wide range of potential clients
- Developing an acknowledged specialty to address these widely felt needs
- Establishing clear goals
- Speaking the common language of the client's profession that can be understood
- Presenting and reporting based on a solid foundation of reliable research

- Engaging in activities related to your area of specialty at every opportunity
- Fostering a profile of ethical behavior and trust

A common need or opportunity that is widely felt is essential to a brand strategy

Brands are utilitarian. They are designed to represent and accomplish a goal. In the field of consulting the goal is most often tied to understanding.

Some professionals are uncomfortable with the idea of brand marketing. These same people are usually okay with the idea of reputation building. To me, brand and reputation represent a difference without a distinction... and in brand development they mean the same thing. Much like business development strategy, the creation of a brand strategy must be aggressive and diverse while at the same time inclusive.

Branding is Important

Branding is more than one of those buzzwords high-powered marketers may drop into a conversation to make you think he or she is clever. Today, branding is a truly important part of the positioning and promotion of a professional practice. In the new world of Internet, blogging, websites and e-communication, branding is rapidly becoming a necessity. The primary goal of branding is to place your name, or the name of your service or website, foremost in the minds of those who buy the type of professional services you provide.

When Jennifer Boyce suggested that I open the discussion about branding for consulting psychologists, she said, "Talk about branding in plain English."

Plain English and Branding

Having a good reputation has a positive influence on all the goals you may wish to achieve – from attracting top-notch clients to meeting revenue or fundraising targets. This includes fostering strong professional standing and nurturing strong business relationships that are the backbone of one's practice. A good reputation and a good brand go hand-in-hand and are what make up a consulting psychologist's brand identity. If you look at my website, www.LuskinInternational.com, it is quite simple but makes the point that I work as a "solutions architect." I solve business problems, personnel problems, do interventions, work with individual concerns and do executive coaching. I can only tell you that this straight-forward presentation works for me.

Reputation and brand are "imputed but hidden assets"

Your brand should give you a distinct, competitive advantage in building a clientele. Both reputation and brand translate into how an individual or organization is seen through the eyes of others. That perception in the eyes of others is what you are trying to achieve. For consulting psychologists, clients may include individuals, communities, groups or any particular vertical in which you may function. In consulting, the term vertical can be applied to areas including health care, commerce, entertainment, education, or public policy. Each vertical requires unique focus and special attention. While one's consulting may cut across many lines of business, each vertical functions as a "silo," having its own types of clientele, meetings, associations and opportunities for consulting. A single brand may not be effective across silos.



The initial impetus for a successful brand strategy is a common need or opportunity that is widely felt. You need to identify and address a market where there is demand. If the need is clear, you must work to raise your profile and gain traction in that marketplace.

Think of your brand as utilitarian, i.e., designed to accomplish a goal. The more clear your goal is, the better your strategy and ability to measure progress will be. Are you involved in dispute resolution, arbitration, executive coaching, forensic media, public presentations related to a specialty, politics and managing high-profile candidates, high-profile projects or high-profile cases? These are the growing areas of opportunity for consulting psychologists. Law firms now hire consulting psychologists regularly to serve as expert witnesses or to advise regarding a myriad of behavioral matters. Motion picture studios, producers, television stations and media companies are using media psychologists in various capacities including product analysis, presentation coaching, brand development and market identification and analysis.

This article is intended to begin exploration of the many concepts of branding and marketing for consulting psychologists. What will be most helpful to you? What are your questions, comments or statements?

Please send them to me and we will explore your topics of interest. I will answer your questions and facilitate discussion. This will start our identification and analysis of the importance of positioning and brand development across the many areas of new opportunities for consulting psychologists. Please send your comments and suggestions to bluskin@Fielding.edu.

Bernard J. Luskin, Ed.D., has had distinguished careers in the corporate world, education, entertainment and psychology. *University Business Magazine* selected him as one who has had exceptional careers in both education and corporate life. He has made recognized major contributions to both digital media and learning, Dr. Luskin has been president and CEO of divisions of major Fortune 50 and 500 companies. He has served as president Coastline College and Orange Coast College and chancellor of Jones International University. He has authored bestseller economics, technology and education books, Emmy winning television series and award winning CDs. He is presently Executive Vice President, Professor and Director of the Media Psychology Program at Fielding Graduate University, and Chairman and CEO of Luskin International, Inc. Luskin is a pioneer in Media Psychology, and Co-Directed the American Psychological Association Task Force Study on Psychology and New Technologies. He is the recipient of distinguished leadership and alumni awards from the UCLA Doctoral Alumni Association, California State University at Los Angeles, The University of Florida, and was recognized for lifetime achievement in digital media by the Irish Government, *Inside Multimedia Magazine*, and the European Union.

