

EPISODE 1: PERSONAL BRAND: HOW TO BECOME A RECOGNIZED EXPERT

with Dorie Clark

Marketing for Creatives Show
at IntNetworkPlus.com

Announcer

Turn your hobby and freelance work into a profitable business! Make your marketing easier by applying the strategies of experienced entrepreneurs and have more time to do the work you love. You are listening to the Marketing for Creatives show with your host Marina Barayeva.

Marina Barayeva

Hi everybody. This is Marina Barayeva. Welcome to the very first episode of Marketing for Creatives show. And this episode will be all about you.

We will talk about how you can become a recognized expert in your niche. You will know some short cuts on building your personal brand, how to gain a credibility and how to get the higher level of clients. And there are many more amazing tips for you.

You have your experience, your knowledge, and your personality and the world need to hear your voice. It is your choice trying to be like everyone or to stand out as who you are.

And now I'm very excited about our guest Dorie Clark.

She was named as a "branding expert" by Fortune, Inc. magazine, and the Associated Press.

Dorie is the author of Reinventing You, Stand Out, and recently published Entrepreneurial You books.

She is a popular blogger for the Harvard Business Review and Entrepreneur, and has been a speaker everywhere from Harvard Business School to the World Bank to Google HQ.

Known as a down-to-earth, insightful, and engaging speaker, Dorie shows people how to take control of their professional reputation, become recognized for the leaders they are, and make an impact.

And today Dorie will share how you can build your personal brand.

Marina Barayeva

Hi Dorie. How are you doing today?

Dorie Clark

I am great, Marina. Good to be talking with you.

Marina Barayeva

That's so awesome to have you on the show. Please tell us your amazing story. Introduce us to what you do. How did you get there?

Dorie Clark

Well thank you. The most exciting thing right at the moment is I just released a new book called *Entrepreneurial You*. And the way that I wended my way there is that I actually started my career as a journalist and I got laid off and had to reinvent myself. I ended up working in politics for a while and ran a nonprofit and eventually 11 years ago started my own consulting business.

Through that process of really examining the reinvention process, I came to write my first book which was called *Reinventing You* appropriately enough.

A couple of years later in 2015, I wrote a book called *Stand Out*, which in many ways I viewed as the sequel because once you reinvent yourself into the job or a career that you want, the next question is how do you get known? How do you get noticed? How do you stand out from the competition so that people want to work with you?

So, I wrote that book. And then finally I really see *Entrepreneurial You* the newest book as the capstone of the trilogy because it's really looking at the question of How do you make money doing what you love? How do you actually create multiple revenue streams and monetize your business in a successful and sustainable way?

Marina Barayeva

I really love your books. I read the book "Stand Out" and am in the process of reading your new book. It's really impressive.

In your book, you share that the first few years of your business you were hustling financially, working long hours, networking face to face in search of business and directly serving clients on site. It sounds tough. But this is a very common situation for people: working seven days a week, hustling on creating a business. At the end of the day, you feel like your life is just passing by.

At what stage of your life or work people need to start building a personal brand? Start thinking about it?

Dorie Clark

I think that, obviously as soon as you can it's ready to start thinking about building a personal brand. But I would say in realistic terms the first mission when you are launching a business is to really focus on sales and just focus on getting revenue in the door so that you are able to pay your rent and have something that at a very basic level is keeping you going.

I think the problem arises when people get so caught up in the rat race of just making the quick sale that they just forever keep on prioritizing.

Well, I have to do this business thing now. I have to make a sale now. And they're building these six-figure salaries, these higher six-figure salaries and they get kind of addicted to that. So, they will always prioritize it. Because it's hard to start to turn down money.

But I think to build a sustainable career over the long term sometimes you have to actually turn your back on some money in the short term. Meaning it is important after you get to a certain level of sustainability and being able to pay your bills to start weeding out your low value clients.

- Who are the people that are not really paying you your full rate?
- Or who are the people who are just annoying clients to work with?

You've got to get rid of them. You've got to jettison them. You've got to say 'No' to the money so that you can then reallocate the time to marketing efforts that will pay dividends in the long term. Although, maybe not tomorrow but they're necessary to building your business a year or two from now.

Marina Barayeva

That makes sense. But in the beginning when you start thinking about your personal brand you're not always can define clearly what exactly personal brand you want to create. Especially for creatives.

Often, they have a full-time job or another kind of works and creative part often is kind of hustle with them.

How to choose what to build your brand around? And how to differentiate yourself from other people so you won't become one more expert, one more person who created the same courses or talk about the same topic?

Dorie Clark

This is a really common challenge and it's certainly one that early in my business I had no clue about it. It was really confusing. I think that where people run into trouble a lot of times is that they assume that figuring out your brand positioning is something that needs to be done from the top down.

Meaning that you have to just strategize and figure it out and then OK, this is going to be my position in the market and then you go do that.

Certainly, some people can do that. That's great if you can. But for a lot of people it feels really weird and awkward to do it that way. It's just not a comfortable thing. You don't necessarily want to make that choice early on. And I was certainly in that camp.

What I would suggest to people who have a little bit more diverse interests so it's not so clear to them exactly where they want to be in the marketplace is that you don't actually have to choose it right at first.

People are going to be pushing you to do it but oftentimes think about your brand and your positioning as an emergent property. This is something that you learn by doing.

For instance, maybe you just start taking on lots of different projects but you see which ones you're most passionate about.

Maybe it's doing a particular type of work. Maybe if you're a designer you like designing a certain type of thing. Maybe it's working with a particular type of client that really lights you up. Maybe you love working the nonprofits or whatever.

Also, sometimes a brand will choose you and meaning you place a lot of little bets and it's just the thing that happens to be the most successful and so you keep getting asked to talk about it. You keep getting asked to do it.

That was the case for me. I wrote a lot of blog posts and one that turned out to be very successful was one that I did for the **Harvard Business Review** in 2010 called **How to Reinvent Your Personal Brand** and that ultimately ended up becoming my first book *Reinventing you*.

Not because I was like: Oh, this is such a brilliant idea I'm gonna do this. I didn't know that it was a brilliant idea. I absolutely did not have the wherewithal to determine that it was a better idea than any of the other stuff that I came up with. I think a lot of us don't have that judgment you just see what the market judges and then you say: Oh, I guess people like that I'll do more of that.

Marina Barayeva

Where to start from? How to start building your personal brand?

Dorie Clark

When it comes to building your personal brand. If we're talking about where to start literally I think that the best starting place is to just pick an area that you are interested in and explore that.

Now of course there're certain things that are useful to have. I think everyone whether you work for yourself or not. I think it's a good idea for everyone to have their own website. Just with a BIO. It doesn't have to be anything fancy, but it's like a bio, way to contact you.

I think that is really useful as a way of sort of staking a claim online so that people can get you and so that you're able to put yourself out there in the way that you would like.

But in terms of the kind of content of the personal brand something that I often recommend to people especially if they are not sure yet what they want their brand to be is actually interviewing other people.

That's a great way to simultaneously create content in the form of interviews, network with interesting people, and essentially get a professional development tutorial as you were learning from these people about their ideas.

So that's kind of a magic combination. Something that I certainly did early on. I blogged very heavily for about three and a half years for Forbes, did about 250 blogs for them during that time and it was a great learning experience and a way for me to hone my own messaging as well.

Marina Barayeva

What about those who already have some sort of base? They are already chosen their career like hairstylists, designers, writers, photographers, they want to develop themselves in this area. What would they start from?

Dorie Clark

In terms of developing your brand if you've already kind of chosen your rough area of specialization. One of the things that I talk about a lot in my book Stand Out and also in an online course that I developed called Recognized Expert is about the concept of so-called social proof.

Social proof is essentially a term borrowed from psychology that refers to your credibility essentially in the marketplace. It's like: how do people know that you're credible? How do people know that they should be listening to you rather than to somebody else?

If we are talking about how do you build your personal brand, a fast way to do it kind of a shortcut is to try to accrue as much social proof as you can. Meaning, how can you attract well-known brand names to yourself and attach yourself to them?

Let's say you're a hairstylist I would say that the kind of things you could do that would really move the needle, it could be getting involved in a leadership role in a professional association.

So, let's say you're the president of the Beijing hairstylists association. OK fantastic. There is a leadership role. It whenever the media needs to talk to a hairdresser they're probably going to call you. So there is that. There is a high-profile affiliation.

Maybe there's a celebrity client that you could start working with. You might say: well, how can I get that person? You can reach out to that person and just offer to do something for them for free. People like free things.

If they think that you'll do a good job they might be willing to do that. Or even better if you have some kind of a warm introduction, if you know someone who knows that person maybe you can get affiliated with them in that way. That's a possibility.

You can get social proof through writing for instance. If you are writing for a publication that people have heard of let's say hairstylists weekly that is a way that you can get social proof. All of those things help and it helps you build your personal brand in a way where you're associated with the premium other brands in the industry.

Marina Barayeva

So, we need to look for the social proof and just to be recognizable by people, right? But sometimes we can get the publications. You have a little bit here, you have a little bit there

and you don't reach your actual potential clients or whatever. What to do with that? What's wrong?

Dorie Clark

Yes, the targeting is key, right? Because you're absolutely right. Sometimes people build up a brand that is great in general but you're not necessarily getting clients from it.

One thing to keep in mind is it especially early on it can be useful, you don't necessarily have to do this later once you're once you're already famous, but especially early on you have to be pretty targeted in your approach.

For instance, let's say you start blogging. Many people get really frustrated because it takes them a while to attract a wide audience. They look at the most successful bloggers and they say: "well, a hundred thousand people read every post that they write. Why can't I have that I posted something on LinkedIn and a hundred people read it? Why am I bothering to do this?"

And on the surface, it might seem like: Well, why are you bothering? You have just 100 people doing it. But early on it's not so much about the mass audience. I mean it would be great if you add it. But really we're where it becomes effective in targeted communications. For instance, what it allows you to do is again if you're a hairstylist you could write a blog post about you got three hot new styles that you need for the fall.

So, you write this post and then you send it to your existing clients who maybe haven't come in for a while and you could say: "Hey, I thought you might be interested in this post that I wrote about Three Hot New Hairstyles. I haven't seen you in a little while if you'd like to come in for a makeover... Just wanted to let you know."

And actually, you might feel bad because: Oh, that piece only has 100 readers and not 100 000. But because you're sending it to targeted clients and using it as a way of having an excuse to communicate with them and to turn maybe a cooling relationship into a warm relationship, you're actually bringing in customers and revenue as a result of it.

So that blog post is actually getting you a fair amount of money because it's bringing a customer in the door. So, we have to kind of reframe how we look at it.

Marina Barayeva

That's interesting. And we have our lives, we have our businesses and we cannot do everything in one time.

You say that building personal brand takes time and from the beginning you will not really get a lot from there. How do you prioritize what to focus on first?

Dorie Clark

It's a tricky question. I would say that's that ultimately as you're thinking about building your personal brand I actually created a framework which I wrote about in the Harvard Business Review.

It's a framework that I teach in my online course, which is called Recognized Expert. And it's basically about how to become a recognized expert.

There's three pieces to it. We've already talked about a couple of them. One is content creation. The other is social proof. The third is your network. And the reason of course that all these things are important that they fit together, right?

Content creation gets your name out there, shows people how you think, shows that you have good ideas.

Social Proof gives people a reason to read that content. They're like: Oh, you know she seems credible. Well I'll give it a chance. I'll see what she has to say.

And then number three your network not only helps you create better ideas but they're also the people who help you spread those ideas later on.

It's actually useful to really think through the question of how you can move the needle on each of those things. Because for most people there's probably one area that you're reasonably good at and then the other ones are de-prioritize.

This is a thing where it's not just like you can be really good at one and then suck at the other two and it's not a problem. You have to be at least decent at all of them. Otherwise you're going to get dragged back and it's not going to work.

So actually, I have an assessment, if folks are interested, it's called the Recognized Expert Evaluation tool kit. If anybody wanted to get it for free it's DorieClark.com/toolkit. It actually is a scored assessment that helps you figure out where you're strong and where you're weak when it comes to your content creation your social proof and your network.

But broadly speaking if you're literally just starting out it honestly doesn't matter. You could pick any of the three things and just try to focus on that.

Focus on whatever you're good at. Just do something where you can make progress. And sometimes just getting momentum is the first part.

So, if networking seems like the most fun to you if you're a social person good go do that. But at a certain point, once you've begun to get a little bit of traction the hard part that many people fail to do is they just keep going with what's comfortable because: Oh, it's nice. It's fun. I'm good at it. You need to start to shift over to the stuff that is less comfortable for you so that you can round out your portfolio.

Marina Barayeva

It seems like we need to roll the sleeves and really work hard. Then, you talk about the social proof and content, and writings, and becoming an expert means that you need to start sharing your knowledge and showing your expertise.

And when you start hosting workshops, giving speeches, publish something online. Some thought leaders advise to share your best information.

However, there are two fears.

The one is "what if I tell what I know, some of my secrets, and my competitors will listen to that and implement my ideas or there will be the newbie photographer, newbie hairstylist, or someone new who will use my tips and steal my clients just offering cheaper price."

And the second fear here "Okay, maybe I'll give everything for free and on my workshops or speeches, but what then I leave for the paid courses?"

Dorie Clark

Yes, important questions. Common questions. But the first thing that I will say is anyone who is worried about those things should not worry about that. They should just not think about that at all. I will explain why.

So, number one: will people copy your work? Possibly yeah that happens sometimes. Who cares? The best antidote against people copying your work is getting your work out there even more. Because if an idea becomes associated with you in the common parlance then other people who are trying to copy it will simply look stupid. They will look ridiculous.

It's like if I would be giving a talk and I would say: Marina, I've developed this really amazing concept about women's empowerment called Lean In and let me tell you all about it. You'd be like: Dorie, you didn't come up with that. Sheryl Sandberg came up with that. And then you'd be like: Oh, well yeah whatever and you'd have to slink away because it would just be so obvious and embarrassing.

It's a really the charge for us just make your ideas so ubiquitous that other people would spot a phony a mile away. I think that is the answer for that.

In terms of what you would save for paid material something like that. First of all, there is almost always going to be somebody who just even if you give them the information they don't want to do it themselves, right?

I was talking with a guy yesterday we were doing a podcast interview and he lives in Florida and his air conditioner just broke which is a bad move when you're in Florida because it's very hot.

So, we were talking about this and what if people steal your concept and it's like if I was an air conditioner repair person and I wrote a blog post about here's exactly how to fix your air conditioner. I could put that out there.

Sure, there are some people that just literally can't pay and so they're going to have to figure it out on their own.

But any rational person who has enough money is not going to say: Oh, let me read this blog post and I'll spend seven hours figuring out how to change the wires and connect the switches so I can fix my air conditioner.

They're going to say: OK, Dorie knows how to fix an air conditioner. I'm going to call her right now so that she can come here and fix it for me in 15 minutes and I am glad to pay.

And so, whatever we give away much as in the air conditioner experience people just want to know that you actually know how to do it. That they agree with the philosophy of your approach. They still want to have help.

It's very hard to have the distance and the perspicacity to be able to apply the principles to yourself. That's why I have coaching clients.

I share tons of material for free. I have 500 free articles out there on my website and places like Forbes and Harvard Business Review.

People could kind of reverse engineer my philosophy if they want. I've written three books. But I still get a lot of coaching clients. Because people want to know: Well, Dorie, how would you apply these principles to me to my business? And I'm able to really help them in a bespoke fashion.

Marina Barayeva

Well, you created a perfect situation. You create content and people come to you and give you money. But that's not always like this.

How about that we need to go and meet other people and there's a saying "it doesn't matter what you know, but who you know".

So how to network with different people? And most important, how to network with the right people? How to reach them?

Dorie Clark

When it comes to networking I think that there's a few thoughts. So I'll take the question of the right people first because this was something that I had to struggle with.

Because when I launched my business in 2006 I definitely did not know the right people. I knew great people. They were great on many levels, but they were not the right people in the sense that they were not the people who could actually buy my services.

That's who you need to know if you're a business owner. You need to know people who can either buy your services or people who are first degree recommenders, who can speak to the buyers on your behalf. That's what's most critical.

So if you don't know them then you need to work backwards and develop a strategy where first of all you need to have a clear picture in your head of who your buyers are. Not everybody does know that so that's the first question is really understanding that.

Then, figuring out: How can I get to know them? And that's actually in many ways why I got into a content creation strategy because I realized: OK, there's some things that I can do person a person, but I can network a lot more effectively at scale if I'm writing content that is going to be appealing to my buyers.

Then they read it and then they're like: oh, I want to meet Dorie. Then they reach out to me. That's like the best circumstance. So content creation can actually aid your networking in that way. But it can take different forms for sure.

Another thing that I did in terms of networking early on was I actually did make a really strategic decision. Even when I wasn't earning a lot of money in my business, I decided that I would invest in fact even like over invest in spending money on networking events, there were conferences where I could meet the kind of person that I really wanted to meet.

Because otherwise I just didn't know them through my social circle and there was no way that I could get to know them through my social circle so I had to kind of take a chance a little bit.

But I figured it was a worthwhile investment. And I actually did turn out to be where I was just like no I've got to put myself in the room with a different kind of person.

Marina Barayeva

That's interesting that you put a lot of attention to content that you create. Do you have any advice how can you create content in scale and do it more?

Because whatever you've done - that 500 pieces, people don't know how to create that. They want to work on their business, but they need to write or do videos or whatever and it takes time. So what to do there?

Dorie Clark

In many ways, it takes less time than people might imagine. I think, I do have an advantage in that I started as a journalist and people might say: Oh, well, you just know how to write blah blah blah. That is one advantage. I would say I'm a reasonably good writer. Although, I think a lot of people are totally fine writers.

The real advantage of being a journalist is that you learn more than anything that. You live and die by your deadline. That is the key.

I think that a lot of people are just too precious about their writing. They think: 'Oh, well, this has to be perfect' and of course 'I'm spending six hours on my blog post' and 'oh, it's going to be so great'.

When you're a journalist you're like: you know what, it's shipping. It's good enough. It's ready.

I'm not saying like: Oh, turn in crappy work it's fine. That's not the answer. But what journalists learn is that if it's 95% there, OK great. Fine, you're done.

If the deadline is here you are done. And so probably what has made it easiest for me is that I on average spent about an hour per blog post. For a really complicated elaborate one, I spent about two hours. I never spend more than two hours on a blog post.

People sort of have these numbers in their head like: oh, it takes me five hours 10 hours whatever. My God! What are you doing? I think if you know your material reasonably well you should be able to write it much faster than that.

Then over a seven-year period to write 500 articles isn't so bad. And it just becomes part of what you do. it's part of how you operate.

Marina Barayeva

And you wrote them. You got your network and you kind of established. But sometimes I see people who have those credibility, they are very talented, they get involve in some projects, publications, but they still get three, four or five hundred dollars for their work while others get more money.

Like you were doing your good work, you were traveling all around the world. Well, all around not the world maybe US. But you've done it cheaper. And it often happens with creatives and freelancers, solopreneurs.

Why do you think it happens and what to do? How to switch to this expert level of clients and income?

Dorie Clark

I think you're certainly right that there are plenty of very very talented people that are just nonetheless not getting paid what they should for their work. And I would say that one thing to look at is who your target audience is.

That's an important sort of structural limitation that I'll point out depending on how you set up your business. There are just some organizations that that literally don't have the money.

And so you're probably never going to get paid that well. If you say "well I'm going to be the graphic designer for education nonprofits".

Unless that education nonprofit is like Harvard University there's probably no budget there. If you're dealing with the local school, parent teacher organization or something like that there's no way that they can pay you what you might be worth.

Because they have whatever - a thousand dollars to deal with for their annual budget and that's it. So I think that can be one challenge depending on the type of work that you're doing.

But leaving that aside if you at least in theory could be working for higher rates, I think that probably what is most lacking for people who are undercharging, probably two things: one is confidence to ask.

The second is social proof. And the reason social proof is so key here is that really the function that it serves is it's kind of an insurance policy for people.

On one hand it's like this vetting mechanism like: Oh, are you credible enough to pay attention to? But it's also an insurance policy.

Because, for instance, if an organization is hiring you as a speaker it's a very risky thing, right? They're putting you in front of let's say hundreds of top leaders or customers or something like that. They might be paying you a lot of money.

It's this big prominent thing where if you are terrible it will reflect so poorly on the person who chose you that they might even lose their job. So it's very very high stakes. They want

to be sure that you are good. They are never going to put somebody up on stage if that person is not proven and tested.

How do you get proven and tested? Well, part of it is having the right collateral so that they can see. You need to have videos of you where you're speaking to the crowds. So sometimes people have underinvested in having the right collateral to show people.

But oftentimes, it's just these markers of social proof where if you say look I've spoken at this conference and this conference and I've spoken for this prominent company and this prominent company.

Then they're then able to kind of take a sigh of relief and say: Oh, OK well if she's done all these things she can't be terrible. She can't be crazy. She must be pretty good. And so therefore I can feel more confident in choosing her and paying her a lot of money for it. So the more you can take risk off the table. And that is what social proof does.

The more you are able to command higher prices because they're paying you for assurance that you will be high quality.

Marina Barayeva

Wow, that's all I can say. That was a lot of information. Thank you! That were very good tips.

If you would put that in the strategy of how to become a recognized expert and you would put it into three steps that our listeners could begin from to start building their personal brand and go with that, what would you suggest them to do and which one they can do already today?

Dorie Clark

All right. So, if we're going back to our recognized expert framework I'll give people one tip for each of them.

If you are looking to do network building I would say step number one is to understand who your buyer is. Literally, what is the title of the type of person that can buy your services? That's what you need to know.

Then ask yourself: Where do they go? And that means literally: what kind of conferences, what kind of meetings?

But also, where do they spend their time? What do they read? Etc.

And if you don't know the answer to that, see if once you've identified the title of that person there's anyone you know on LinkedIn or maybe somebody that a friend of yours knows on LinkedIn that would be willing to introduce you for an informational interview.

Because you need to get in the head of your customer to understand where they are finding out about things and where they are convening. So you can spend more time getting to know people like that. That would be the step number one.

Number two is related to social proof. I would say for that let's pick blogging because that's a favorite one of mine. If you could start blogging for a prominent publication in your field that would be great.

Obviously, you may not be able to start at the top the most prominent, but there's something called the latter strategy where you can start where you are.

Maybe it's blogging for your company paper. Maybe it's blogging for your local industry, The New Hampshire hairdresser's Gazette, whatever it is. But you start out and you do that and then you move up incrementally to more and more prominent publications that people have heard of.

Something you can do is identify a publication that you feel like is within your reach that you could write for and send them a pitch letter on almost any website. There's going to be 'how to write for us'. And so you go to that. You send them a little note say "Hey, I'm interested" And try to get the dialogue going.

And then for the last category about content creation this ties in with the social proof thing. Maybe pick somebody to interview. Once you've identified a publication that you can write for, although it doesn't have to be, it could be literally your LinkedIn blog or a blog you have on your website.

Pick someone that you think is interesting from your industry. Ask them if you can interview them and then write up and interview.

Plan to do that in the next two weeks to write your first post, that can be an interview with somebody that you admire. That's a nice way to do a favor for them and spread the word about them. Also, great content creation for you.

So, any of those things I think would be very worthy first steps.

Marina Barayeva

Dorie, it's so honor to have you on a show today. Thank you so much.

How can we connect with you now? How can we know about your books, your projects and just reach you out, interview you?

Dorie Clark

Awesome. Thank you, Marina. Well if folks would like to check out any of the voluminous articles that I have written they can get them for free. Just access them all on my website dorieclark.com.

And I also do have a free resource as well related to Entrepreneurial You my new book. It is the 88 questions Entrepreneurial You self-assessment. It walks people step by step through how to apply the principles to their own business and develop multiple income streams on their own. You can get that at dorieclark.com/entrepreneur.

Marina Barayeva

Awesome. I'll make sure to put everything into the notes. Thank you so much and I wish you have a good day.

Dorie Clark

It's great to talk with you. Thanks Marina.

Marina Barayeva

That's all for today. Thank you for listening. For the show notes and the full transcript go to intnetworkplus.com/1.

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