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Amy Vetter • Aug. 14, 2018

We've all read over and over how technology like AI, machine learning, and even blockchain, is threatening to transform traditional service offerings in the accounting profession, causing the work to look very different in the future. Does that mean accounting professionals should start looking for a new career? Absolutely not. What it does mean is that marketing your firm the way you have done it in the past is no longer enough.

Instead, you need to focus on your "brand" by exposing your own unique personality and values. In a profession where everyone is an expert in understanding the numbers, how will your firm stand out? We often take this for granted, or assume people know what makes us unique, but we need to be intentional about it. Defining your firm's brand, which is often closely related to your personal brand, can clearly define your value in a way that clients and potential clients will understand and feel more engaged with you. Here are four ways to do it.

1. Be yourself

These days, clients will turn off the second they feel you're trying to sell them something and you are not being authentic. The growth of [native advertising](#) and [influencer marketing](#) attest to the fact that people don't respond favorably to a more obvious approach. You could look at this trend as a challenge, but it's actually an opportunity to differentiate your firm without relying on billboards and huge advertising budgets.

The best way to begin defining your brand is to take a look in the mirror. What matters to you, both professionally and personally? Who do you want to help? What

is an example of meaningful work that is more than just a job, and that aligns with

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yourself on your website should dovetail with your social media accounts, how you come off in person, and the experience you create for your clients and your team. Mixed messaging creates **cognitive dissonance** in the minds of your potential clients, leading to skepticism and an unwillingness to commit. Additionally, if your team feels the way people behave inside the firm is different than the outside experience, they might feel disengaged and not believe in the mission.

However,, when your branding is consistent, it enhances your overall presence, and it reinforces your purpose and what you're all about. Defining your **core brand values** is crucial in this respect. Clear values will allow you to identify the voice of your firm. From there, you can create content and marketing materials that reflect your values, whether that comes in the form of a YouTube video or a multi-page whitepaper. Your team will also be aligning to those values and communicating the same messages as well.

3. Be relevant to your clientele

Ask yourself what your most valued clients and ideal prospects have in common. Where do their needs align with your branding and who you prefer to work with? Odds are, the overlap is pretty substantial. Spend time understanding the language they use, rather than the language you typically use to describe their pain points and services they need. Focus on this messaging in your marketing, and you'll instantly connect to your target demographic. When a potential client feels comfortable with your brand and personality, they'll be much more inclined to be your client.

Whenever you're creating content, you need to think about the intended audience. For example, if you're a huge sports fan, but that doesn't seem relevant to your prospects when they are deciding on a firm to work with, remember that your brand should reflect who you are. That doesn't mean your brand has to be a one-to-one translation of your interests and personality. Rather, it should reflect the qualities

that separate you from the pack as a thoughtful accounting professional who cares

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to do to align it to external perception is crucial. Over time, it's easy for branding to lose its initial sense of purpose. When you feel yourself diverging from your ideal messaging, it's time to refocus your efforts.

Branding with personality and values may not come naturally to everyone, but it's an essential practice for the long-term health of your firm. As the dollars-and-cents aspects of accounting become easier to perform, clients will decide who to work with based on a synergy with their accounting. So, in closing, a question to start with is: Why would a client want to work with you?

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Amy is a sought-after speaker, panelist, and authors articles for many national publications and online journals. Amy has inspired thousands using her experiential knowledge on the digital transformation journey, where she provides guidance on how to move to cloud technology, and also the change management necessary to be successful.

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