

Webinar 12 Handout: **STEP 5 TO BUILD YOUR BRAND**

Step 5: Engage, engage, engage. And then engage more.

You've outlined your goals. You have your brand. Your business is set up. You've started to market yourself. Now it's time to get out there and engage. With everyone you know, and everyone you don't know. This is when you begin to *live your brand*. From the moment you wake up in the morning until the minute you fall asleep at night, your brand should be reflected in everything you do, everything you say, and every action you take. Your brand will no doubt be something you are proud of, so go ahead and scream about it from the hilltop (even if you are more of the whisper type)!

Spread the word. Tell everyone you know about your brand and ask them to tell everyone they know about it. Word of mouth marketing is often king (or queen!), especially as a way to gain clients, so don't be afraid to ask and don't be surprised how effective it is.

Ask for referrals and testimonials. When your clients are happy, ask them to send you another client! People love to talk about their success with others, especially when it has to do with how great they feel and how great they look -- encourage it and use it to your benefit, and then reward your referring client with a free session or something else appropriate as a thank you -- it goes a long way. Also, ask clients to provide testimonials and get permission to use them: you can use testimonials on your website, in a newsletter, in social media, etc. Testimonials do not have a shelf life -- once you have them, they are effective for the life of your brand. Start this habit from day one. If you only have one client and a testimonial from her, and someone else has a hundred clients but no testimonials, you will be *perceived* as more successful in the eyes of the public. You can also ask clients to review your business on sites such as Yelp, Google, etc. Don't be afraid to ask your clients to help you so you can help others.

Ask for help in the socialsphere. Invite all of your friends to Like your Facebook page/Follow your Instagram account, and ask them to invite their friends to do the same. Periodically, post an ask or a "call to action" in your Facebook status -- ask them to sign up for your newsletter or follow you on another social media channel or share the post with their friends. Use this same mentality on all of your social pages -- be direct and ask for what you want -- you just might get it! And again remember, not all social networks are created equal. They are all important, but what works on one may not work on another. Get to know your audiences in each network, respect what works with them, and deliver content specifically tailored to them.

Engage with your audience (and people outside of your audience). Get involved in your community of peers *and* potential clientele. If you want the world to view you as an expert, then you need to respect your peers and make sure they see you as an expert. Posting content is just one part of the social media puzzle. You need to engage with your following, and with people you would like to join your following! Like and respond to comments on your posts; like, comment and shares posts from your peers; interact with brands you stand behind; join relevant Twitter parties/chats; share an interesting article, new study or delicious recipe with a client or colleague....you know your audience and what they respond to, so respond to them!

Embrace your colleagues. People are often surprised when I tell them I have lunch with a fellow RD popular in the media or a nutrition expert from a private practice. I believe there is room for all of our expertise in this world and we can do more by working together strategically. Reach out to other nutrition professionals in the area and let them know who you are and what you do! Collaboration can be a huge key to success and social media has made it easier than ever to work together--I get SO happy every time I see amazing and successful women working together! Embrace colleagues in the social sphere, but remember to make time for real-world meet ups too.

Partner up. Partnering is one of the best (and fastest) ways to grow your brand. Find other brands that are like-minded and figure out a way to work together. Remember, when you approach a brand, you want them to know that you want to bring value to them -- not just that you want to do something great for your own brand. People who understand the value you will bring them will be much more enthusiastic about partnering, rather than if they think you are just trying to get something from them. Here are a few ideas:

- **Guest blogging:** offer to post a partner's blog to your audience and you can do the same for them. It's an easy way to introduce one another to your respective audiences.
- **Offer your time:** Offer a free session for one lucky winner in your partner's audience. You are giving her audience value and getting your name in front of them. Offer that partner the opportunity to do the same with your audience.
- **Give away free stuff:** Who doesn't love free stuff? Maybe there is a company out there that is willing to donate a product to your audience. It doesn't have to be an Oprah-esque gift like a new car! There are tons of smaller, healthy products out there trying to make names for themselves, too -- find them and reach out to them. The

more value you bring to your audience, the more likely they are to tell their friends about you. The more you do for a brand, the more likely they are to continue to support you and build a relationship with you.

- **Get involved in your community:** Help start a 5k race or yoga in the park, or volunteer at a health fair, or sponsor a little league team. Any way you can relate something health and wellness to your brand is a no brainer -- the participants are all interested in your field, so it is the perfect opportunity to get them interested in you! Maybe you want to create a spring weight loss challenge with your clients or at your spouse's company. All it really costs you up front is your time, and the financial rewards could be potentially huge. Getting your name out into your community is a great way to let people get to know you, your brand, and how committed you are to their health and wellness.

Answer the door immediately. When opportunity knocks, that is. And know that opportunity disguises itself in many ways. The days when answering an email within 24-48 *hours* was acceptable are pretty much gone. When someone emails you, email them right back, even if it is just to let them know you don't have an answer but you are finding one. I can't stress how important this is. Believe me I have made mistakes here. People want to work with other people who are *on it*. There have been countless last minute media opportunities that I would have missed if I hadn't responded immediately. Also, last minute promotional ideas come up and people are looking for a quick YES! that is beneficial to everyone -- if you aren't there to answer the phone or return the email, someone else will be. It makes a difference in our fast paced world -- this is part of *living* your brand. Now, all that said, some of you are probably saying that there is no way you can be glued to your email all day, and I completely understand that. After all, I never take *any* interruptions when I am seeing clients or enjoying *my* time, so there are certainly exceptions to this way of operating. If this sort of faced-paced lifestyle does not sit well with you, or if it is just not feasible, then create a schedule that indeed works. Maybe it is that you check emails first thing in the morning, again at lunch, and once more at the end of the day. It's ok to set boundaries -- you just need to make sure they enhance rather than interfere with your bigger goals.

Figure out referrals. Who is most likely to refer to a nutritionist or personal trainer or health coach? Think about who could send you referrals, and take them out for tea or bring them lunch or whatever works for your schedules. If you are a nutritionist, chances are you will have clients who you will recommend to a personal trainer, or yoga studio, or pilates instructor. Get to know those experts, so that when they have clients who need a nutritionist, they will think of you first in return!

Make a specific list right now of all the potential referral sources out there for you and create a game plan for each of them. If you offer to take someone out for tea, send a few times immediately that might work. The faster you get it on the calendar, the more likely it is to happen. Be sure you make the tea worth both of your times by being prepared with what you want to discuss. Learn how to discuss what you do, what your brand is, and what you want to accomplish in succinct, understandable terms that excite others as much as yourself, and especially don't forget to explain everything you can do for that person. Ooze your passion -- it is contagious! And most importantly, *follow up*. I have had many people through the years come to me for referrals, and we have a great meeting but then they never follow up on what we discussed and they email me a year later saying, "remember me?!" We are *all* busy and we all want to help people we like -- the key is making it really easy for someone to help you. Before you leave your meeting, reiterate the few things you discussed that you are going to do (send her business cards, mention her on social, put her in your newsletter, get her in touch with so and so...etc.) and then *go and do it right away*. Then touch base frequently even if it is just to say hello or send her an article she might find beneficial, etc. If you are out of sight, you might be out of mind.

Network, network, network. If someone wants to meet you, take her up on it. If you want to meet with someone, ask her. Even if you don't know *exactly* how you could work together. The bigger you build your network, and the more value you bring to more people, the more apt people are to think of you first when the time comes. You may not meet the person who will change your life or get you your next client or write your next profile piece, but you will probably meet the person who knows the person who knows the person. Networking has no endpoint. It should be just as important as answering emails and collecting payment for your services - and you will never be done. When you are reaching out for a meeting, be sure to send a few dates and times as a starting point to get the calendars open. Leaving things too open-ended or leaving it completely up to the person you are asking for time from runs the risk of it not happening. As stated above, *make it as easy as possible for people to help you*. Remember, there is no such thing as too much networking or knowing too many people, and it's not about asking them for help initially. It's about providing them with value and letting them see no-strings-attached how great you and your brand are for them. Earn the eventual ask. You are truly valuable to them and you are truly helping people.

Who do I know that I can ask for help in spreading the word about my business or gaining referrals?

Who can I partner with on social media or other projects?

What can I offer to others' audiences?

Who do I want to set up meetings with?

Yes, this is Step 5, but you are nowhere near done with building your brand. In fact, you will *never* really be done! You will be constantly evolving, trying out new trends, engaging and growing your network, and possibly even rebranding as the times change and your brand develops. These steps 1 through 5 will get you where you need to be in order to become a successful nutrition business, but you may need to revisit certain steps in order to maintain and run a successful nutrition business for years to come. Best of luck!