Top of Form

Bottom of Form

AUTHOR BRANDING

By

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I’ll be heading off to an author conference soon, Chapter Con, which is being held at St Mary’s Campus down in London. I’m excited about attending, and a little scared… because I’m taking part in a couple of panels and that’s out of my comfort zone. However, I’m also excited about it, and looking forward to meeting many of my ‘peers’ and picking up tips to help me, as well as pass on some of my own. First up I’d like to thank the ladies behind the scenes who work so hard at putting these things together, they truly have a hard time, especially when dealing with people such as me… an OCD nutcase who, well, must be their worst nightmare, but Katie, who has been an absolute gem, has made this as painless as possible for me.

So, I’m doing a panel on branding, and I’m going to put it up here for a couple of reasons… one being that I hope it can help others, but also so the people attending can quickly come over here and grab it if they need to… voila! So, let’s get started.

Branding… what is it? Well, branding isn’t just your logo or banner etc, it’s a whole package affair and I hope to give you a wee insight. So, branding is something which is solid and consistent and not just visually but across the board.

Branding isn’t just your name…it’s so much bigger than that. It’s what people ‘expect’ when they think of you/your brand/your product and as authors that makes it even harder for us to get it right. Your brand is also to do with what readers expect from you and your books. So, if you write contemp romance, or pnr and suddenly put out a different genre series … that, in effect, dilutes your brand and it can, I’m not saying always, but it ‘can’ dilute it … in effect … it dilutes you.

For instance, we all know when we pick up a can of Coke what to expect, they have a brand and they stick to it. If one day you grabbed a can and took a drink and suddenly it tasted like orange juice … you’d be unhappy because that’s not their brand. They’d changed it, they’d diluted their brand and Coke would never do that. So, you shouldn’t do it either unless you want to dilute your brand.

You might be one of the lucky ones who can write very different genres and have a mix of readers who’ll pick up anything you write, but for the most part, if your reader base loves one genre they don’t generally expect you to pop out something drastically different and can be thrown if you do.

A lot of readers don’t genre hop, they read one and a lot stick to it so you don’t want to lose them, this can lead to losing your precious readers … just because you weren’t true to your brand.

It’s why some authors use different pen names for different genres as in … different branding for different genres. Or they’ll have So and so writing as … so their readers know it’s them but also know they’re writing in another genre. They’re not springing it on them but they’re also tapping into their reader base too in case those readers might want to pick the story up.

Then there’s the Social Branding aspect … and please excuse my french, but it really does come down to never, ever, be an eejit, or to put it more bluntly, an ass. Not ever. Don’t be passive aggressive or out and out aggressive. Do not, repeat, do not engage in drama on FB. Ever. No matter what’s going on in the industry … and let’s be honest, there is always drama, every other day there’s something happening. Do not engage. No matter if you know the person, no matter if you have inside gossip … do not engage.

Readers see this. They see it as a reflection of you, your brand. It dilutes it, dilutes you … and it can take forever to rebuild. If at all.

Be ‘truthful’ to your brand … what I mean by that is … don’t have one face on your Author page a different one on your personal. Readers will see it and that will not go over well. So be true to who you are and be consistent. The fact is, your author business is just that … a business and a lot of people forget that. You should remember to conduct yourself just like you would as if you were working in any other job because this IS your job.

We’ve all seen authors who’ve acted badly on FB … and had their careers impacted by that. Don’t let that be you. It can impact not just on readers, but on your work too, other authors see it, they see how you are on FB, they see your brand, and it could influence a future decision on whether someone would work with you on a project, a shared world or a boxset, for instance.

Look at FB as your ‘office’, if you do that, and act as if it is, then you won’t go wrong, after all, you wouldn’t go into your office and start scrapping with another member of staff there… would you? Going online on FB and having a barney with say… another author, or a reader, or someone who you don’t agree with… it’s just the same. Except, it’s far worse because it’s online and everyone can see you doing it, and once it’s out there online it can never be undone … screenshots are forever, so even if you do something you regret and delete it, you can bet your backside that someone has taken screenshots and posted all over the place about it.

So, golden rule, don’t do it, FB is your office and you’re the Boss. Act in a manner that does your brand proud and you’ll be fine.

Then there’s the visual side, with logos and banners etc. Notice how I came to this last? It is important, of course it is, but in my opinion if you don’t get the above right, images don’t matter. You can have the best images in the world but if the rest isn’t done right this part is a total waste of time.

That being said, let’s get to it… now, you don’t have to spend tons on these. Yes, of course you can, I have in the past, I’ve had several different logos, and did a rebrand a few years ago but didn’t feel it suited me completely and I was lucky enough to mention it to a friend, another author who’s got a talent with working with images, and straight away she said to me, okay, let’s work on this and so we did. And voila, we ended up with something I was much happier with and when I asked about it in my reader group and in my newsletter… the feedback was wonderful.

So, for this part of it, I’d say to go with your gut and work with someone you feel comfortable with but not to tackle this yourself unless you have a first class knowledge in that department. And even if you do, it’s sometimes difficult to decide these things when you’re designing something for you and not a client.

So I’d say to ask for plenty of input before deciding on a final product and remember, always, your **brand** and what you’re trying to put over to reflect it. Sometimes simple is best.

You can, of course, look at other authors in your genre to get some inspiration if you have no clue what you want, but of course, don’t copy someone else’s design. You want something that’s unique to you so that when people see it they’ll automatically think of you and only you and not get confused and wonder, hmm, is that so and so… or? You want your own brand, not someone else’s.

That’s all I have, I hope I’ve helped you get some insight to branding as a whole and not just the logo side of things and I hope I’ve not bored you to death.

Ava x