

# Everyone is an Expert So What Does that Make **YOU**?

By Mindy Gibbins-Klein

**T**hese days, everyone seems to be an expert or a guru of some kind. This may be due, in part, to pressure applied by the media and branding coaches and consultants. The idea is that if you are the best in your industry, you will stand out and have an edge over the competition. If this idea sounds familiar, it may be because I have blogged and spoken extensively on this subject over the past few years. It has been one of the key themes running through this column, as well as my book *24 Carat BOLD*.

The issue is that there are now many good people out there, people with good-looking and smart-sounding brands, straplines, books and other products, and web and social media presence. The bar has certainly been raised, and all business owners are now faced with a choice: 1) to speed up the pace of differentiation and try to be more and more clever; or 2) to win clients over in another way. I believe that in addition to any branding, marketing and differentiation you may be engaging in, you also want to remember that your best USP (unique selling proposition) is in fact... you.

One thing is certain: you definitely need to be great at what you do. Clients and customers have become more discerning and there are more and more excellent coaches and NLP practitioners in the market every day. Excellence is not just an illusion or perception. Once people get past fancy branding or sexy packaging, they want real solutions to real problems. Knowing your stuff and providing real substance and value is 'table stakes' – the minimum you need to play the game.

Are clients even looking for experts? This is a big area, and one which may not be easy to nail down. For example, people may say they don't care, when in fact they are impressed by great books, blogs and articles and feel more comfortable choosing someone with a high profile. However, too many people are simply self-proclaimed experts. I have seen people calling themselves 'expert', 'guru' and 'thought



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leader’ on their LinkedIn and Twitter profiles. That makes me cringe because I know the person wrote the profile himself. If others bestow that kind of label on you, great. Just think twice before calling yourself one.

I know it is competitive out there. Luckily the market for your services has also grown, and there is enough business for everyone. You could think of yourself as competing just against yourself. So, instead of focusing on the other coaches out there and what they do compared to what you do, who is first, better, faster, more innovative or more creative, you simply do your best and present your authentic self in the best possible way. I call this ‘being yourself, only bolder’. In other words, you are your niche; it’s a niche of one. To take advantage of this, you need to present a full technicolour version of you and your brand. Many people hide behind clever straplines while shying away from engaging fully on a personal level.

Sharing personal stories which show your vulnerability can capture someone’s interest much better than slick marketing. People still buy from people, and no one can ever be a better you than you. At *The Book Midwife*, we find ourselves saying this repeatedly to our clients; it’s almost as if they don’t trust that being themselves is enough. And yet, the most popular books are those written in a conversational and personal style. If you are writing, publishing and speaking, then you are giving people opportunities to get to know you through different media, rather than just relying on more common forms of marketing and networking.

When you present the real you, it also becomes much easier to collaborate with others. People know what you stand for, and can see what you are like. Other professionals can then decide to work with you to provide added value to clients. I have started to see a lot of coaches working with associates or ad hoc arrangements to give the client even more. Sticking to what you are good at and what you are known for allows others to know where the boundaries are. Having a micro-niche is good for everyone because they know exactly what you can provide. It may be hard to avoid the scope creep or the temptation to stray into other areas, especially when there is a business opportunity. Having the discipline to say ‘I don’t actually provide that but I have a colleague who would be perfect for you’ will impress the client much more than your attempts to satisfy that requirement yourself.

So, you probably won’t or can’t be an expert in everything. Releasing yourself from the pressure to be even more of an expert than the next person frees you up to shine in your own way. If you are a true expert in your field, niche or micro-niche, people will soon see that and pay for that, and others will want to collaborate with you. Especially if that niche is a niche of one. ■

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