

Speaker 1: Hi everybody. I'm Cec Busby, editor of Flying Solo. Welcome to our weekly podcast where we step inside the minds and lives of soloists and small business owners. Today's guest is Debbie O'Connor. Now, what Debbie doesn't know about brand building isn't worth mentioning as the author of Brand Magic, How to Build a Brand with Personality. Debbie understands just what it takes to build a brand that customers connect with. <laugh>, let's just say it's more than just getting creative with a logo. Debbie has over 20 years' experience working with businesses, helping them to create beloved brands and her agency. White River Designs is one of the most awarded in Australia. If you wanna find out how to make branding or brand building a foundation of your business, then listen up as Debbie has some incredible advice. Welcome, Debbie. Thanks for joining me on the show today.

Speaker 2: Thank you for having me. I'm excited.

Speaker 1: Yay. It's always good to have an excited guest, and I'm particularly excited about our topic that we're gonna be talking today because you're an absolute wiz when it comes to branding and brand building. So, can I ask you, what is it you think makes a brand connect with the customer?

Speaker 2: I think there are a number of things. I don't think there's one silver bullet here. So when it comes to branding, what I like to look at is it's about, uh, reputation building. But I do believe that if you have a strong brand personality, it gives you something that you can really connect your customer too. It helps you define what kind of language and tone you're going to create, what kind of brand experience you want for your customers, the type of culture you want. So I think it's a really good baseline to help you with your branding, but there's so many different elements to branding, which you would all know about. Mm.

Speaker 1: That, that's a conversation that should happen at the very beginning of, of your business as well.

Speaker 2: Yes. I think this is something that almost becomes a bit of the foundation for your brand, because if you're able to discover what that personality is, it means that you almost create a persona for your brand, which, if you do that from the beginning, it just means that everything can stay consistent from the get-go. Which I think when it comes to branding is a really important thing. A lot of people think that they need to mix things up and change things up, and what that often does is it creates confusion. Whereas if you stay consistent with your brand personality and the core messaging and your purpose, that is where you really start to create a connected brand.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Cause I think sometimes there's a bit of confusion. People think of brand and they think, oh, my logo, you know, my, my colours. But it's, it's much more than, um, getting creative with your logo. As I said, as you just said, you know, the brand personality and making it part of your foundation is, is so important.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And you know, I think that's one of the biggest myths that I always come across, is that people believe that their logo is their brand. And especially when you are a new

startup, um, you're getting your business up and running and someone says you need to focus on your brand. They think that that means you go out, you get yourself a logo, you slap that on everything, and that is branding. Um, that isn't branding. What we look at when we come to the creative side of the brand, as in the visuals, the, the brand identity, that is one element of branding. So that includes your logos, your colours, your fonts, um, your type of imagery. And because we're such visual creatures, it is an important part of our brand, but it's not the core essence of our brand. And this is where there's a fundamental difference between just simply getting a logo and building a brand. Because what we want when we build a brand is for people to get that gut instinct. We all have it, you know, that gut instinct to say, do they want to work with you or don't they want to work with you? And a lot of that is built on your reputation that you start building when you're creating your brand.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm. Um, I guess as a business owner, it's kind of easy to go, yeah, I wanna make a brand that resonates with people, but it's, it's not that simple. You know, you've gotta really put some thought into it. And, um, with your book, you've talked quite deeply into that psychological side of building a brand and the elements that go into that. Can you explain a little bit about that brand psychology and how you found, um, Y's archetypes to be extremely helpful when building

Speaker 2: Them? Yes. Yeah. Look, I, I find this particular part of the branding process fascinating. I absolutely love it. Um, and the reason why I've used Carl Young's 12 archetypes is because they actually sit in our unconscious bias. So they're these 12 different personalities or archetypes as they called. And the amazing thing is that we actually already know and understand all 12 of them. And this is the amazing piece. We don't have to be taught any of them. So if I were to say to you an innocent maiden, a heroic prince, a ruler over all the land, and a wise old woman, I bet you've conjured up in your mind not only what they look like, but also their personality traits. And I would bet you a million dollars right now, that that innocent maiden does not have short black, spiky hair covered in tattoos, walking down the street, kicking over bins and swearing at people. Right? Your brain is going, no, that's not the, that's not the innocent maiden. The innocent maiden doesn't do that. However, if I said to you, that is the rebel, your brain goes, oh, I get that. Yes, I completely understand that. So that is where these archetypes are so incredibly powerful because of the fact that they sit in our unconscious bias.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, do you think that, um, with so much talk about, you know, breaking down unconscious bias and people trying to think outside of stereotypes, they're still really effective?

Speaker 2: Um, yes, I actually do, because the baseline of it is always still the same. So these 12 archetypes, obviously they are the, the core, the main ones. These were the ones that young, when he studied hundreds and thousands of personalities, these were the ones that always kept popping up. Um, and we see them in our, uh, fairy tales. Stories passed down from father to son. Even in the movies that we watch today, they're all so powerful. However, in my book, what I actually do is I break them down even further into six additional family members. So it means that if you feel that the overarching archetype is a little bit too broad for your, um, personality that you're wanting to

develop for your brand, that there is a way of honing in underneath the core archetype, um, for you to find more of a focused personality with a, a couple of different attributes that start to come in as well. Mm-hmm.

Speaker 1: <affirmative>. So how do people go about narrowing down that, that particular archetype for their brand? What do they need to, like, what are the questions they need to be asking themselves and how do they know which one is the right fit for

Speaker 2: Them? Yeah, so this is a really important piece of the puzzle, is it's not about what you do, it's all about how you do it. And this is funda fundamentally the most important part of that, because in the end, every hairdresser does the same thing. Every dentist does the same thing. Every concreter, every everybody in your industry does exactly what you do. So if you are focusing your personality simply on what you do, you are pushing a boulder uphill. You are really trying to compete against the obvious, if that makes sense. So I'll, I'll give you a little bit of an example here. So as, as a doctor or a nurse or a vet, people might think that you need to be the caregiver. That should be your personality. But essentially being a caregiver is what you are actually doing. That is a core part of your industry and your profession.

Speaker 2: And if we were to take someone like, uh, Dr. Patch Adams, now we saw Robin Williams in the movie Patch Adams, um, many, many years ago. I dunno if you watched it, but it's a fantastic movie. And it tells a story about this man who becomes a doctor later, later in life. And he uses the power of entertainment and laughter to try and help cure his, his patients. And so when we look at Patch Adams, his brand personality is that of the entertainer, not the caregiver. Because what he does is obviously caring, but his personality piece is all about being fun and lighthearted and not taking himself that seriously. And therefore he's able to bring that essence through to his patients. So, does that make sense?

Speaker 1: Yeah, it does make sense. Um, but I guess for a business owner, they're so kind of, um, especially our listeners that are, um, in micro business and, and soloists, what they, what they do is their identity. So how can they kind of separate that into the brand piece?

Speaker 2: Yes. And I totally hear you there. So let me give you another example, and I hope these examples help. Cause I, I do like examples and storytelling. Um, so if we were to take for example, Richard Branson and Virgin, so Richard Branson, he's, he's his own person. He's got his own brand, which is very much that of the explorer. The explorer is a bit of a pioneer. They're a thrill seeker, they're doing things independently and, um, you know, they love the thrill of the chase type of thing. However, Virgin on the other hand, is what we would call the rebel, because let's face it, in the eighties when he named his business Virgin back then, that would've been absolutely taboo. That would've been shaking up the status quo and going against the norm and being quite disruptive. And as a brand, Virgin goes into different industries and really shakes up the status quo and does things completely differently. So what we're looking at here is going, okay, as Richard Branson, as his own personality and his own brand is entirely separate to the Virgin one. And it's looking at it going, okay, what do we wanna become famous for?

What do we, how do we wanna do things that make us different to our competitors?
And that personality piece that can be put onto that.

Speaker 1: Hmm. So what if your, your business is already quite well established, um, but it's not exactly attracting the attention you want. It's not oozing personality, it's all a bit bland. What what can you do to fix that?

Speaker 2: Yeah, and, and this is where I work with a lot of clients in this particular space because they've been, you know, plotting along doing their thing. And really they've realised that they have a business, but they don't have a brand. And what I mean by that is, uh, business is simply transactional. So, you know, a, a kid on the side of the road selling lemonade is doing business because it's a transaction. However, brand is all about connection. Um, and so what they're realising is, well, you know, once someone's done a transaction, there's no connection left, and they feel, well, we, we don't have that brand piece, that personality piece. So what we do is we, this, and this is a, a great exercise for, for any business to do, is to look at what are you doing really well that actually connects with the customer?

Speaker 2: What are they saying is, oh, I loved it when you did that. I saw you did this. I, I heard from somebody that this is what you did with them, or whatever the case is. When you share all of those little positive nuggets of gold, tap into that because that is what is working really well for you. Now, if you don't have any of those, it is about sitting down and saying, alright, what do we need to do to now move forward to make sure that our brand does connect with the customer, not just on a transaction basis. So what are we doing that is just boring and mundane that we actually wanna get rid of? What are the things that, where we can add some personality? And, you know, there's certain things that we just, we ignore every day where we could add personality, um, emails, for example.

Speaker 2: How do you sign off on your email? Um, personality can come in simply in the way you greet someone. Do you say, dear Mr. Jones, dear John, hi John. Good day, mate. Um, how you doing? You know, there's so many different ways just in a salutation that you can actually bring personality to the business. But what you need to do is sit down and go, right, if what we have right now is not working, we need to look at it and go, okay, this is where we wanna be placed. This is what we wanna be known for. Do you wanna be known for the ruler the best in your industry? Now obviously everyone wants to be known for that, but like, is that the most important part or would you like to be known as being fun and lighthearted? Or would you like to be known as a creative thinker?

Speaker 2: Totally out of the box. Like understanding what it is that's really important to those core values for your business is important because by owning that space with that personality means that you can still be the best in your industry. So I wanna give you another little example is, um, we, we've got a fantastic sustainable brand here in Australia called, who Gives a Crap. And it's toilet paper. And I mean, it's just toilet paper. There's nothing amazing about it. However, there really is something truly amazing about the brand because the brand is a bit of a double on touch, as in who gives a crap? Well, you know, hopefully you go to the toilet once a day or twice a day or whatever.

It's, however, um, when it comes to, uh, who actually gives a crap, do you care? Do you actually really care about the world around us?

Speaker 2: Because if you do, then you should buy their toilet paper because they use sustainable. Um, you know, e everything in the business is about sustainability, recycle. They use bamboo. They, they have a whole ecosystem around simply the, the product itself. However, they also use part of their profit, I think it's 50% of their profit to, um, hygienic services, um, in third world countries. So you can now see that the business is more than simply selling toilet paper. And the way they go about it is this lighthearted banter that they have even in their name, you know? And so you can see how taking something as simple or mundane as toilet paper and turning it into a brand that really connects with people and it has a purpose behind it. And there's most certainly a personality there as well. That is what makes people go, right, I'm going to buy toilet paper from them, um, as opposed to buying toilet paper from one of the big supermarkets.

Speaker 1: Yeah, I think they're a really, uh, interesting case study. I've spoken to Simon Griffiths a few times, and he recognised that, you know, toilet paper before they came along. Also, all of the campaigns were, you know, the f the Fluffy bunny, the, the Happy Puppy, the <laugh>, like yes,

Speaker 2: The

Speaker 1: Soft PORs, like all these weird random things and very, very big, big companies that he thought they would have no chance of competing with. So they thought like, what, what way could they attack it in terms of their, their brand personality that would be different? And of course, he thought of humour <laugh>. Yeah. So,

Speaker 2: And there's so much toilet humour, isn't there? So he's nailed it.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And uh, something that the other one, the other competitors couldn't actually go into that space cuz they were so cemented in the way that they'd done things before as well. Yeah, it's interesting.

Speaker 2: It's so interesting. And it's fam it's fabulous to watch and sort of play along as it were.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm. You know, he sat on, he did a, a, a Kickstarter and he sat on a toilet for 50 hours until they raised the money to Oh my God. So start the business. Yeah. And live streamed it <laugh>. Yeah. And it was in like the very, very early days of Facebook Live

Speaker 2: <laugh>. Yeah. That's insane. And you look at something like that and you think, who would've ever thought to do that? Yet? That is exactly what he's done. It's something completely different. And he's gone, I'm just gonna do a different spin on, on toilet paper. But in the end it's simply toilet paper.

Speaker 1: Hmm. Yeah. Uh, another thing that, uh, you speak about in your book is also using the five sensors to help you create a brand experience. Could you dive into that a little bit

Speaker 2: For me? Ah, yes. And this is something that I think as business owners, we don't delve into enough because as humans what we want is to have an experience. Like if we have a really good experience that sits in our memory so that when somebody then comes along and says, oh, do you know a plumber or a great hairdresser or a dentist, or whatever it is, um, that that muscle memory works for you, and you go, oh my gosh, I went to, um, the best restaurant or, you know, a florist or whatever the case is. So what we need to do is tap into the five senses where we can. Now obviously if you are a bricks and mortar and you've got people walking into a store, you have so many more options to tap into the five senses because you've got touch, people can, can touch your products.

Speaker 2: Um, you've got sight, you can make your displays look beautiful. You've got smell where people can actually, you know, walk in and you might have a particular scent that is through candles or diffusers that you might have around, um, you could even have taste where people can, you know, taste some of the products or, or whatever the, the case is. So there's so many different elements that you can tap into. And so I have people saying to me, but I'm an online business, you know, I sell, I sell products online. Well, the whole unboxing experience is such a big thing. Apple really pioneered the unboxing experience. And so if you are selling any products online, the packaging that the product comes in becomes part of that sensory experience tapping into the sight and the touch and even the smell. You know, if, if you spray, um, you a bit of, uh, perfume or something onto any of that, it means that when people experience your brand, more of the senses are tapped into.

Speaker 2: And I've, I've got a friend of mine who is a financial educator and everything she does is online. However, she has actually been able to use the sense of taste, even though nobody can taste any of her products. But what she does is she loves hague's chocolate. And so when she's explaining shares or, you know, putting money into property or whatever the story is that she's telling there, um, she uses these hags chocolate frogs. And so she'll have these chocolate frogs out and what she might do is bite into a frog to show how depreciation is happening. And so she's using the sense of taste to bring about this sweet sense of financial, you know, empowerment as it were. Even though no one can taste it, they can imagine the taste of the frog. So there, there are ways of being able to tap into the different senses to create an experience for your customers that becomes really memorable for them. And if we can utilise these senses as much as possible, that is a way that subconsciously we are connecting with our customer just that little bit more than someone who's not tapping into the senses.

Speaker 1: Hmm. Now what about the culture piece? Because you might get all of this right, um, on paper, but if you don't have the team to help you back it up, it can be problematic. Yeah.

The role of culture in your brand personality

Speaker 2: Oh, absolutely. And this is where, you know, the, the whole branding part of your brand is that process in saying, right, this is what we want to become famous for or known for,

or when people are thinking about us, this is what we want them to think about us. Then the process of branding is actually making sure that everything you put into place means that the customer experiences that outcome. It's all well and good saying we are fantastic at X, Y, and Z. And then you drop the ball and you don't actually deliver on X, Y, and Z, then it means your brand is gonna fall flat because you are not delivering on the promise to the customer. So one of the most important things to do, and really your your team is your, your biggest asset when it comes to your business, they can make or break it when you speak to any business owner, one of the, the, the biggest challenges that they will say in business is, is having staff.

Speaker 2: And so if you can create a culture in the business, which is hard to do, you have to work on it, but it starts from the top and it filters down. And so the leader really needs to be the one to set the scene and say, this is how we treat each other. This is how we want to behave amongst each other and how we want our clients to be treated as well. So it's not a just an internal culture, it becomes an external culture as well. And when you have businesses that are imploding from the inside, I tell you what your clients absolutely know about it. So it is a really important piece of the puzzle.

Speaker 1: So what can you do if you, you see that, um, that culture side of things is going off the rails? Are there any

Speaker 2: Oh yeah. Quick

Speaker 1: Fixes you can recommend?

Speaker 2: Yeah. Look, you, you need to, you need to put a stop to it immediately. Um, you know, if you notice that people are gossiping, um, within the business or people are talking behind your back or you are hearing stories or anything like that, the, the, the biggest thing you need to do is bring everyone together and say, okay, this needs to stop. We are not going to behave like this. This is the culture of the business and this is how we wanna move forward. And if you don't feel like you are equipped for that kind of conversa conversation, that is when you need to turn to a business coach, a mentor, uh, someone like myself who comes in and deals with branding, get someone in externally because you do tend to find that people sit up and take a little bit more notice when an expert comes in to help fix certain things. Yeah. Um, because if the problem is coming from the top, it's very hard to fix that when the, the leader is not recognising that there's is a core problem there. They might be aware of it, but they don't wanna think that they're the problem.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And then it comes back to reputation, doesn't it as well? I mean, you want the, the business and the brand to be able to stand by its reputation and if there's this other stuff going on in the background, it can be very difficult to do that.

Speaker 2: Absolutely. And now you can see it sort of comes full circle. So, you know, there's no one thing that makes up a brand. It's all these many little elements that actually compound and create that brand, which is then the reputation you want to give to the,

the world. And that reputation is also about becoming an employer of choice where people want to work for your company because they hear it so fantastic and that you have a good environment and you've got great working conditions and people love to go to work and they enjoy being together and it just oozes out. And it's easy to work with customers because they can see that everybody is happy and, um, they all work well together.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Now I know at the very top of this conversation we said that, um, you know, brand is much, much more than the logo, even though quite often that's people's go-to. But on and aside to that, can I ask, what about colour psychology? Because it seems to be becoming, um, you know, coming higher up the ranks these days with people when they are actually considering things like doing their brand and, and branding. What, what's your thoughts on colour psychology?

Speaker 2: Oh, it is so powerful. Um, I use the psychology of colour in when I'm working with my clients all the time. So, um, I look at the psychology of colour, the psychology of shapes, there's also psychology of shapes. Um, and, uh, we, we then look at that psychology piece with the personality. And when you put those together, it becomes very powerful. But when it comes to colour, we already have, um, preset determinations as to what colour means to us. So on one hand, the colour red, if a woman is given a bunch of red roses, it means love and passion, right? But on the other hand, if someone is driving a red car, a, a, a sexy red car, it's about the thrill and potential danger. Um, and if you see something cornered off with big red boarding, there's, there's usually danger around that as well.

Speaker 2: So colours have a lot of different meanings and understanding what those different meanings mean, not just for your brand, but also culturally as well. Um, so if you have a, an audience that is based not just in Australia, you might have a worldwide audience or you might have an audience that is specifically Asia, as an example I'll take is, um, you know, for, for us the colour white is all about purity and innocence. And so we get married in white because that is what we perceive white to be. However, in Asian cultures, white is actually the colour of deaths. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, they don't get married in white, they get married in red, red Cause red is the colour of love for them. And so if you understand the different understandings of colour, um, in the different cultures, then it means that you're starting to really tap in, uh, to, to the psychology of colour.

Speaker 2: I, I worked with a client once who was in the re um, the restaurant industry, and he said to me, oh, um, so what he used to do was go into restaurants and actually do the planning of the restaurant as to how the kitchen should be lay laid out for the best service and you know, how the restaurant should be laid out to get the food out and, um, as quickly and easily as possible. And he said, so I would like a brand Deb, that we have the colours blue because blue's my favourite colour, and then I want yellow and black, because that shows that an area has been cornered off <laugh>.

Speaker 2: Okay. Well, when an area's cornered off with, with yellow and black, it kind of indicates maybe there's been a murder <laugh>. Yes. So that might not be the best colour

combination in that sense. And interestingly enough, the colour blue is an appetite suppressant. So when you think of a lot of the restaurants, there are not many restaurants or cafes that are out there that have the colour blue as the core brand colour because it is an appetite suppressant. However, you'll find a lot of those restaurants will have colours where food naturally, the, the, sorry, the colour naturally occurs in food like green, brown, yellow, orange, red. Um, you might even have black, which is very much a neutral colour, whether people say it's a colour or not. Uh, in this case, let's talk it as a colour. Um, but when you have the colour blue being an appetite suppressant, it's not a very good colour for a restaurant. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So when you understand the psychology of colour, it means that you start making very discerning, um, choices for your brand and then you bring in your personality. So if you have a personality that is the entertainer or the creator, your colours can be very bright and vibrant. However, if you've got a personality say that is the ruler or the sage, you want more sophisticated, more, uh, muted tones that would then bring about that feeling of the personality as well.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, Debbie, we could talk about this for hours, but I think we've actually run out of time. So it's been great having you on the show today. I really appreciate you taking the time out to chat with our listeners about brand and branding and, and all the things that come in between, um, your book, brand Magic, how to Build a Brand With Personality. Where can we find it?

Speaker 2: Um, uh, yes. Well, firstly, thank you for having me. It's been fantastic. And as you can hear, I could probably talk with a mouthful of Marbles under Concrete on the topic. So, um, thanks for, thanks for being patient with me. Um, yes, so the book, you can get it on Amazon, um, or you could head to brand magic.com.au. So thank you for that.

Speaker 1: My pleasure. And if anyone's looking for someone who knows their stuff about, about brand and branding, Debbie is the absolute expert and you should get in touch if you're needing some assistance. She's got a great agency, white River, named after her hometown in South Africa. I found out before this chat. So what's the website,

Speaker 2: Deb? Uh, white river design.com.

Speaker 1: Awesome. Thank you for joining me.

Speaker 2: Thank you so much.