

# GET NOTICED

## *Develop your brand*

By Amanda McGrory

Just like any notable and memorable consumer product, you have to build your own identity as a brand in order to establish credibility. Here are some quick tips on branding yourself, in a pain-free fashion.

Think of some of the qualities your prospects are searching for in a financial advisor. Credibility, competency and experience might make the list. With today's troubled market, many are looking for a reliable financial advisor, and to secure those prospects, you must show them you hold all of the desired qualities by building a reputable brand.

Branding is about creating an identity that projects who you are and what you represent, says Stefanos Loizou, principal of Financial Workshops/Strategies for Life in Middleton, Mass. With a strong brand, you become recognizable and prospects are more receptive to your sales pitch.

"Once you have reached out to your audience and they recognize you, there is a greater willingness for people to want to work with you," Loizou says. "You're not a stranger; it's similar to getting a warm referral. When trying to contact someone on a cold basis, you're less likely to get an audience, but if they recognize you from

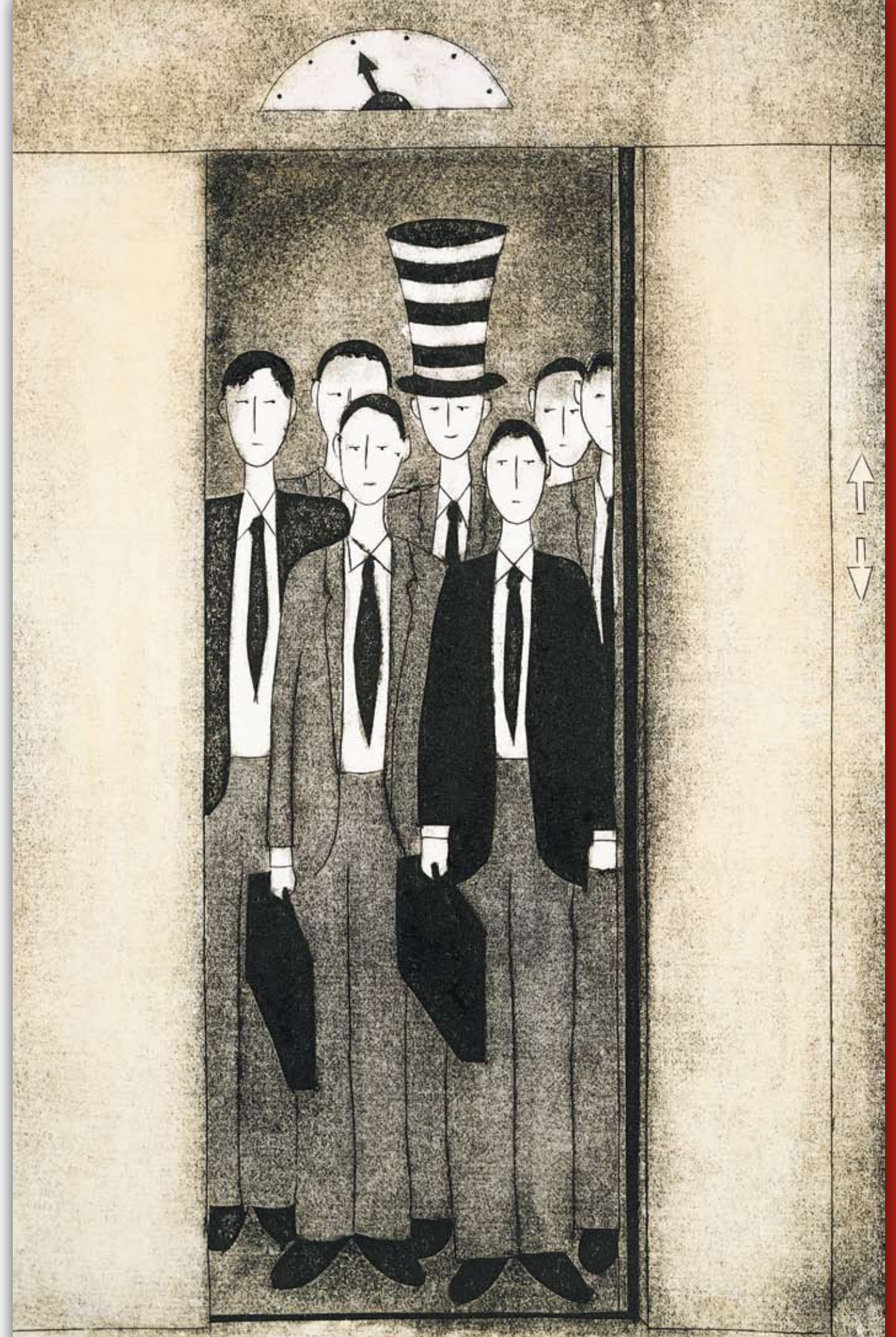
branding efforts, they are more likely to trust and meet with you."

### **Branding** *through traditional media*

By using traditional media sources, you can achieve a brand image that exudes knowledge and authority, Loizou says, and appearing in news articles is one of the most common ways to do so. Whether you author the article or are quoted as a source, it speaks to your industry wisdom, and once published, notes Maribeth Kuzmeski, president of Red Zone Marketing in Gray-slake, Ill., you have a tangible promotional piece to show prospects and clients.

To capture media attention, try sending a press release to appropriate contacts listing your qualifications and expertise, Kuzmeski suggests. Journalists often look for informed sources or contributors, and a press release builds awareness and credibility of your brand.

Loizou also recommends booking radio >>





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“Some people are at ease making television and radio appearances, but others are most effective at written communications. The key is to play to your strengths.”

Stefanos Loisou,  
Financial Workshops/Strategies for Life

or television appearances or even starting your own radio talk show. In this sluggish economy, many are unsure of how to attain financial security, but with a radio show, you can address some of the most pressing issues and offer valuable advice while establishing your brand as a respected resource.

In fact, for three and a half years, Loisou has hosted his own radio show, “It’s Your Money—It’s All About You,” which airs in the northern Massachusetts area and streams live on the Internet, potentially reaching listeners around the world.

“I’ve even been searching for another radio station at the moment, recognizing the outreach and benefits that it provides,” Louisou says. “People can call in, directly speak with you and find you trustworthy. It creates an identity for you.”

No matter what traditional media avenues you decide to implement, Loisou says, be sure they fit with your personality and comfort level. Some people are at ease making television and radio appearances, but others are most effective at written communications. The key is to play to your strengths.

### Branding online with social media

In today’s technology-driven environment, the Internet is the first place many people turn for information, particularly among adults earning over \$100,000 a year, Kuzmeski says. Naturally, building a website is the first step in online branding.

When creating your website, include photos and videos of you and your staff for the greatest impact, Kuzmeski advises. Website visitors typically have a short attention span. With a click of the mouse, your website visitors can instantly leave your page when boredom strikes. You must immediately capture their interest and including graphics is one of the most effective methods to keep them browsing.

“People will leave your website within seven seconds or less if they don’t see something that attracts their attention,” Kuzmeski says. “But a picture or video stops them in their tracks. They’re looking for you and want to see you.”

Once you’ve built an effective website, you should also incorporate electronic communication mediums into your branding plan. Vince DiCecco, owner of Your Personal

Business Trainer in Acworth, Ga., suggests using a branding electronic communications website, such as [www.aceofsales.com](http://www.aceofsales.com). With this tool, you can send electronic newsletters, e-mail blasts and postcards that can be designed to represent your brand. The communication pieces can be personalized by including your photo, contact information and logo.

“The great thing about using this service is it’s mailing to your particular contact list,” DiCecco explains. “It’s not just buying a list and sending out spam or unsolicited e-mail. It’s welcomed communications that match your branding.”

Of course, social media, particularly Facebook and LinkedIn, has become a prominent branding opportunity, Kuzmeski says, because it adds a sense of credibility. Page visitors can view your resume, certifications and even client recommendations, and you can post links to your finance-related blog or client appreciation videos.

“Don’t just say you’re a knowledgeable financial advisor,” Kuzmeski says. “Prove it with what you have to say on social media. Provide your followers with valuable information that shows your expertise.”

Social media is also an effective channel for promoting traditional media branding, Kuzmeski adds. At times, Internet communications can seem overwhelming. Between the countless blogs, message board forums and online new sources, there is plenty of information to sort through, and your traditional media appearances can get lost. However, social media can steer your prospects and clients to your featured spotlights.

“You may have been quoted in a great Wall Street Journal article, but

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maybe your clients didn't read it," Kuzmeski explains. "With social media, you can post a status update or link to the article or video, which will guide clients and prospects to that information."

## **Branding** *within the community*

Besides media and online avenues, there are also many community organizations that offer branding platforms, Kuzmeski says, such as the chamber of commerce and rotary clubs. Often, these organiza-

tions host financial seminars and welcome a qualified speaker. But this isn't the time to deliver a sales pitch. Instead, offer your knowledge to the community.

"Talk about tax cuts, new legislative provisions, what the healthcare changes mean," Kuzmeski says. "It's a way of giving back to the community, but it also shows what you do and enhances your name recognition."

Loisou says these speaking opportunities are particularly valuable because much of the planning is already underway, allowing you to focus on the messaging.

"They do the advertising for you, and you provide the format," Loisou says. "They even provide the coffee and sweets. It's a great way to brand yourself in your area and get new clients." >>



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Consider volunteering for a chairman position in the membership division of one of these these local organizations, DiCecco suggests. Typically, these **committees need the most help from volunteers, and it can also shape your brand image.** As new members join, you receive all of their contact information and learn more about them as people before discussing business. The relationship becomes personal, and prospects are more likely to identify with you.

Remember, whatever branding methods you choose, DiCecco says, you must appear likeable and trustworthy, and your target au-

dience must find it convenient to accept your communications. With traditional, online and social media platforms, your branding message is respectable and widely available.

"People buy from people who they like, trust and with whom it is convenient to do business," DiCecco says. "It's not how they're investing; it's how confident they are in their financial advisor." ■

AMANDA MCGRORY IS THE ONLINE EDITOR FOR SENIOR MARKET ADVISOR. SHE CAN BE CONTACTED AT [AMCGRORY@SENIORMARKETADVISOR.COM](mailto:AMCGRORY@SENIORMARKETADVISOR.COM).

**Online exclusive** For more ideas on branding, read Nolan Baker's "3 steps to creating a memorable brand image," by visiting [www.SeniorMarketAdvisor.com/3stepstobrand](http://www.SeniorMarketAdvisor.com/3stepstobrand)

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