

Me, myself, my enterprise

Making yourself the face of your business can be a winner, but the experts say it's vital you remain true to yourself, writes **Jo-Anne Hui**.

Blonde bombshell and entrepreneur Pia Andersen could be patiently waiting in line at the grocery store and be approached for events work from complete strangers, largely because of her unmistakable style.

"I find a lot of my business is generated from the fact that I stand out in the crowd, but I accept that," says the founder of events and styling agency Vintage Allsorts. "My image within my personal branding is my best source of advertising. I'm advertising my business every time I step out of my house."

With her bouncy blonde curls, '50s-inspired frocks and signature slash of red lipstick, Andersen's personal brand plays an integral role in her business.

She has wide knowledge of the vintage era and a keen, stylist's eye for detail. In the past, she has worked on events such as burlesque star Dita Von Teese's performances for Cointreau and developed concepts for the Sydney Festival, the Museum of Sydney and the Historic Houses Trust.

Personal branding is about connecting with customers and clients by adding a human face and personality to a business, says the chief executive of branding firm Jump the Q, Rachel Quilty.

Richard Branson and Jamie Oliver are entrepreneurs whose businesses go beyond just planes and food.

One of the first steps to developing

a personal brand is thinking about what makes you and your business unique, Quilty says. Perhaps you have a unique style or point of view. Maybe you have an interesting story to tell, or life experiences you can share that add value to your business.

Quilty says one of the most effective ways of building your brand is to become an expert in your industry. Networking in your industry is one way to mark your territory, she says. "Become connected with your industry association, become a mentor and attend networking events," she says. "Don't be just one

'My image within my personal branding is my best source of advertising.' Pia Andersen

person that sits at the table, offer your services to sit on registration or become the MC."

Another way to strengthen your profile is to write articles or reports. Quilty says one place to start is by launching your own business blog and regularly posting articles that can generate discussion within your community.

And if writing isn't your strength, hire a copywriter to help out.

One of the challenges Andersen

has found over the years is ensuring that her branding is maintained. In the past, she has turned down opportunities to avoid diluting it. Last year, she was approached by a washing powder company to act as a housewife in its marketing campaign.

"I just had to say no because I just felt it took back everything I believed in as a modern businesswoman," she says. "I didn't want to be seen as a stereotypical housewife. There's no way I would have been able to control how they used my image beyond that."

Authenticity is key to building a strong personal brand, says Quilty.

"You need to deliver a level of expertise, show that you've got the necessary skills and attributes and come forward with your true personality. When you don't come through as who you really are, the marketplace can see that."

Andersen agrees. She has seen others latch onto the vintage trend, simply dressing up in '50s garb for a short period to make money, then disappearing from the scene.

"This is just who I am, and even if I was a lawyer working in the city working on a criminal case, I'd still be Pia Andersen," she says. "It just happens to be that I've been lucky enough to develop a business based on my personality which allows me to be this person every day."

For more marketing tips, go to mysmallbusiness.com.au



Real deal ... Pia Andersen's love of past styles is genuine. Photo: Louise Whelan