

Take a Stand for YOUR BRAND

Want to stand out?
Take some cues
from sales trainers
Kim Duke and Stuart Gray.

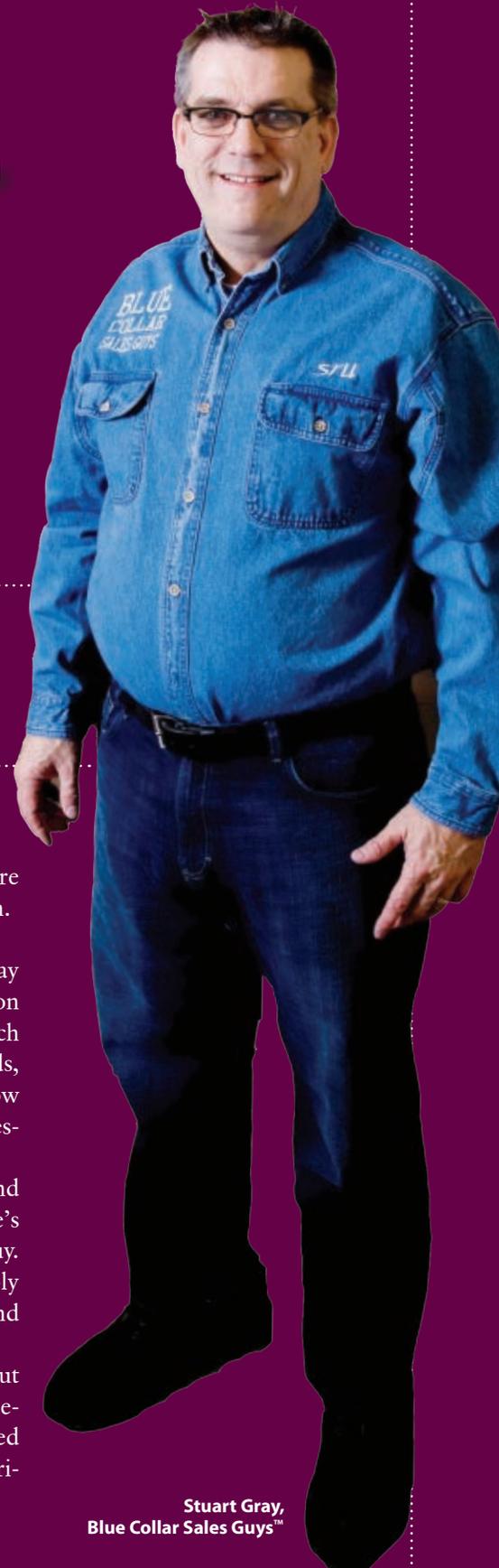
A brand is not a logo. It's not a brochure or an ad. And it's definitely not a slogan. So, what the heck is it then? As speakers Kim Duke and Stuart Gray explain, a brand is an experience—a culmination of all the ways you reach your audience. And each touch point—your Web site, business cards, ads, e-newsletters, voicemail messages, trade-show booths, everything—should be a consistent expression of that brand.

Both Duke and Gray are sales trainers and speakers with unique, memorable brands. She's the Sales Diva, and he's a Blue Collar Sales Guy. From their brand names alone, you probably already have a picture of who these people are and the kind of businesses they run.

They know it doesn't happen overnight, but Duke and Gray have reaped the rewards of creative branding. Whether you're just getting started or are considering a brand overhaul, their experiences can help serve as a roadmap.



Kim Duke,
Sales Divas, Inc.



Stuart Gray,
Blue Collar Sales Guys™

Kim Duke: The Sales Diva

Kim Duke had a successful career in advertising sales for two of Canada's largest television networks. Outside of work, she began speaking at women's business events, where she caught the entrepreneurial bug. When she spoke with women, she discovered that while she finds sales easy, most women don't. There was a clear market, and Sales Divas Inc. was born.

"My main focus was going to be on women entrepreneurs and women who sell," she says. And even though some people told her this niche was too small, Duke was convinced she was on the right track—she knew female entrepreneurs were one of North America's fastest growing markets.

"Women, in general, are very afraid of selling," she says. "They're afraid of coming across as too pushy or manipulative. My mission in life is to help them realize you don't have to be those things to be successful."

She chose a unique niche—and a unique message. "I'm a sales trainer who thinks that cold calling is an archaic style of selling," she explains. "I've taken a lot of heat over that over the years."

But it was also a way to stand out from the crowd.

Getting Diva-Dized

Once Duke established her market, it was time to name the company and develop the brand's personality and look.

A casual brainstorming session over wine with friends led her to the name Sales Divas Inc. She received words of caution: Male-led companies might not want to work with you, colleagues told her. But Duke was comfortable with that.

"I take a stand for my brand," she says. "I wanted the name to tell you what I am. Divas know what they're doing."

She wanted the brand to reflect a polished, professional one-stop shop for women in sales—plus, she wanted to make the experience fun for her clients.

To drive that home, she chose purple as her main branding color and writes all company materials, from business cards to convention brochures, in a spirited, conversational tone that reaches out to women.

She trains clients, for example, at the High-Speed Stiletto Sales Camp. Her books are specifically designed to fit into a woman's purse. She doesn't use a normal business card holder, but instead a purple box with a tassel. And her envelopes are made of sparkly purple paper.

Her outgoing voice-mail message, she adds, is designed to catch people off-guard. She begins with, "I'd love to take your call, but I'm out making money right now."

Duke sees to it that anything representing her brand is consistent. It's about "savvy and sassy sales advice."

"Some brands are incredibly boring," Duke says. "That can never be said of me. I am not Duke and Associates."

Savvy and sassy also shine through when she speaks at conferences or coaches clients directly. She tells the tough truth, she says.

"If someone wants a coach who's going to pussyfoot around, then I'm not the right fit," she says.

And if a prospect isn't the right fit, Duke doesn't force it. When a potential client from a large corporation called and said he wasn't comfortable with her company name and didn't like her purple Web site, she referred him to someone who was a better match.



Duke's brand reflects a polished, professional one-stop shop for women in sales.

"I dig my stilettos in," she says. "If they think [Sales Divas] is fluff, I'm not going to do a big sell job to convince them otherwise."

She encourages speakers to think through the kinds of clients they want, and then use their brands as a filter. That way, you don't end up in front of an audience that's the wrong fit.

Duke has thousands of newsletter subscribers from 54 countries, and she works with clients around the world. She's doubled her sales every year since she started her business in 2001, and she's received media attention from major networks in the United States and Canada.

"That doesn't happen when you're vanilla," she says. When speakers develop their brand, she says, many focus too much on being something for everyone and end up with a diluted product.

Here's the payoff: As a speaker, Duke says clients don't challenge her rate, which she relates directly to her

branding efforts. They know what she's about and the value she brings.

"My branding is filtering out the people who won't pay the rate," she says. "By the time we meet, my branding has already done most of the job for me."

Stuart Gray: Blue Collar Sales Guy

Stuart Gray's career started in the '70s selling newspapers. Eventually, he moved into the hospitality industry and began to teach others how to sell. In 2005, Gray left the corporate world and launched Blue Collar Sales Guys, which is based in Minnesota.

"The original goal was to create a traveling road show that we could take through the upper Midwest," he

explains. An RV enabled him to do a lot of speaking without having to fly. Plus, it was a branding opportunity.

When you see Gray's RV, two words jump out: "Up Yours!" The full phrase is: "Sales: Up Yours!" (Translation: Increase your sales.)

"I'm a native New Yorker, and I speak from my heart," he says. "Some people can deal with it, but some can't. As a speaker, I know I've crossed the line. I've offended people. But I also know I get the learning through."

Tired of typical sales seminars, Gray and his partner didn't want to talk about sales theories in their presentations. Instead, they present easy-to-use techniques in a fun, engaging way.

The Blue Collar brand, Gray says, revolves around key attributes: challenging, edgy, direct, assertive, fun, interactive and the permission to play.

Business Card, Beer Coaster or Both?

When you meet Gray or see him on stage, it's clear he's different. And that's exactly what he wants.

"The reason people are speakers is because they have their own beliefs," he says.

"Everybody gets to apply their own passion, personal interest and creativity."

He wears Dockers or jeans, denim shirts or bowling shirts.

"I'm very casual, yet professional," he notes.

On stage, the interactive element is critical. At the beginning of a presentation, he passes out toilet paper.

"It's our 3x5 card," Gray says. "Then, we have people write down three things that are in their way of success in sales." A toilet sits on stage, and he asks attendees to "flush their crap."

Stage backdrops are supported by PVC pipe. A chalkboard replaces flip-charts and PowerPoint®. At the end of a



To drive home his brand, Gray's props include a trash can, a toilet, toilet paper and a cooler of beer.

Checklist: Do the following touch points reflect your brand?

- Business cards
- Web site
- Blog
- Facebook fan page
- Twitter background
- Voicemail greeting
- Signage
- Trade-show booth
- Brochures and other collateral
- PowerPoint presentations
- Proposal templates
- Stationery and envelopes
- Gift packaging
- Print, radio and television ads
- Print and e-mail newsletters
- Invoice



Gray urges attendees to “flush their crap.”



Duke dispenses savvy and sassy sales advice.

“The brand is really a promise.”

—Stuart Gray

5 Tips for Building Your Brand

When you think about your brand, it’s easy to get overwhelmed. After all, it spans everything you do and say in your business. Sales Divas Inc. founder Kim Duke and Blue Collar Sales Guy Stuart Gray offer a few tips to get you started.

- 1. Research.** Survey prospects and make sure there’s a market for your idea.
- 2. Think about the big picture.** “I would encourage everyone to get to the root emotion that they want to create in their customer,” Duke says. “Build the brand around that emotion.”
- 3. Know your strengths.** If you don’t have a built-in network of friends who write, design or program Web sites, hire professionals to help you.
- 4. Be different.** At the end of some presentations, Gray gives everyone a plunger—and tells them they “don’t have to take any more crap.” He’s not afraid to stand out.
- 5. Build a community.** Duke says a lot of speakers drop the ball when it comes to creating a community.

“Is it more important to sell a book or get someone’s e-mail address?” she asks. “Always get the e-mail.” Build a database of contacts, and talk to your community often.

seminar, Gray pulls out a cooler of beer for a Q&A session. His trade-show booth has the blue-collar look, too.

“We bring in an old painted door as our table, and we use canvas backdrops with graffiti,” he says. “I don’t want to look like everybody else there.”

Be Memorable.

“Our business cards are beer coasters,” he says. “If you get one of my business cards, you’re going to remember it.” And maybe even use it.

Gray knows his irreverent style doesn’t resonate with everyone, and he’s OK with that. Ultimately, the Blue Collar brand is about substance.

“The brand is really a promise,” he says. “For every event I do, I guarantee them double the results of their investment.”

Ready, Set, Brand

Both Gray and Duke pride themselves on being unique—and having brands that reflect that. Do they have logos and Web sites? Of course. But they also know those elements aren’t the sole expressions of a brand.

When they started the branding process, each focused on the big picture, including their target market, the emotions they wanted to conjure, the types of clients they wanted to attract and the kinds of events they wanted to speak at.

And to solidify their success, Gray and Duke stand behind their brands. They take risks to help them stand out, but they never forget who they are and what their brands mean.

“For speakers, you’ve got to figure out where your passion is and stay in that space,” Gray says. “Your brand has to be consistent with who you are.”

Get Connected

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