



# *7 WAYS TO BRAND YOU + WHAT YOU DO*

*HOW TO BLEND WHO YOU ARE WITH THE  
BUSINESS YOU WANT TO BE KNOWN FOR*



ONE

*get clear on what you  
want to be known for*

**SHARE YOUR  
VISION**

You may work for yourself, but still feel like you haven't yet created or expressed the kind of business you really want. Or you may be working a day job (but dreaming of being your own boss on the side). Imagine being the kind of expert who is seen as a guide, who gets hired not only for their talent, but their ideas, and who shares not only their work, but their advice and their point-of-view.

*If you're only branding yourself as a service-for-hire, then you're only sharing half the picture of the creative expert you are (or want to become.)*



Creative entrepreneurs rarely stop at the skill they began their business with. So what's your business vision? Is it...

- to work with a certain kind of dream client? Who?
- to work within one very specialized kind of niche? What?
- to pair your skill with planning, consulting or some other kind of service, or even a one-to-many product? How?
- to infuse your creative work with more purpose? Why? To what end?

Not every one of these vision questions above is going to get you fired up. Some of them you may feel so-so about at best, and overwhelmed about at worst. But we would bet—after all the creative entrepreneurs we've worked with, coached with, and talked about our fears and dreams with—at least one of these questions above, and its answer (even if it's still fuzzy), feels like "what's next" for you.

*A fuzzy vision can make you feel shy about sharing content, shaky about your offerings, and slow to shape the brand you know you really want.*

So let's talk about that fuzzy feeling. You know you want what's next, but you might think you need to get your vision (and your content) completely focused in and clearly shaped up before you can start sharing it with other people. But often what we share as-we-go is what shapes what we become.

Imagine your vision coming through in:

- your emails with prospective (and current) clients
- your wardrobe and personal style
- your blog posts (or mini-posts like Instagram, Facebook or Pinterest)
- your daily schedule and routines
- your "about me" page on your website
- your "about me" conversations with your friends and family

*What's it going to take for you to feel like you can start sharing your vision on your brand places: your site, your social media, and in your face-to-face conversations?*

Now I bet you're imagining all the rewriting, redesigning, or even just rethinking you'd have to do to start infusing that vision in those "brand" places. "But I don't have time for shaping up those sharing places!" "My site needs too much work before I start sharing there!" "I still want to restructure, rewrite, and redesign x and y before I start doing z!" "How can I tell people the kind of work I want to be hired for if I haven't done it yet?!" You do it a little at a time. You try it on. You practice. You change a little copy here today, and a whole lotta copy over there in a month.

So which of your "sharing places" do you need to update to feel like you could really start shaping your "what's next" vision by writing

and talking about it now? List out the places first: website (get specific by page), blog, social media platforms, email, typical new business conversations, typical casual conversations. Then mark which you could start slightly altering today...Within 30 days...Within 3 months. It's not an all-or-nothing challenge. Start peppering your vision in now – with a goal for a longer term shift for the "what's next."

## **FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // SHARE YOUR VISION:**

Imagine it's five years in the future. You are creating the kind of work you want to be known for, and only working with dream clients. What does your brand and business vision sound and feel like?

I'm \_\_\_\_\_ [ *your name here* ] \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ [ *your title* ] \_\_\_\_\_.

I love \_\_\_\_\_ [ *your specialty* ] \_\_\_\_\_,  
for clients like \_\_\_\_\_ [ *your dream clients* ] \_\_\_\_\_.

And they love how I \_\_\_\_\_ [ *your approach* ] \_\_\_\_\_  
when we work together.

But at the end of the day what they really get is  
\_\_\_\_\_ [ *your deeper deliverable for them* ] \_\_\_\_\_,  
because I'm more than just a \_\_\_\_\_ [ *your title* ] \_\_\_\_\_,  
I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ [ *your creative expertise* ] \_\_\_\_\_.

I can't wait to try what's next for me, which is  
launching a \_\_\_\_\_ [ *your next big endeavor* ] \_\_\_\_\_.

It's hard work, but totally worth it, because  
as I create for others, I'll also be creating  
\_\_\_\_\_ [ *your dream* ] \_\_\_\_\_ for myself along the way.

**WHERE YOUR VISION SHOULD BE FELT & SEEN:**

Does your vision feel too aspirational, too personal, too scary, or just too big to share in bold letters on the home page of your website, or in the conversations you're having?

*What if you could just share half of your vision – just half. Which parts would you keep just for you, and which would you let shine through?*

**IMAGINE YOUR VISION COMING THROUGH IN:**

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- *your emails with prospective (and current) clients*  
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- *your wardrobe and personal style*  
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- *the blog posts you share*  
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- *your daily schedule and routines*  
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- *your "about me" conversations with friends and family*





TWO

**CREATE  
THE WORK**  
*you actually want  
to be doing*



If you could only sell one thing, what would it be? If you could stop selling one thing, what would you stop? You may offer lots of ways to hire or buy you, but if you keep selling the stuff that you think will get you hired, but doesn't exactly float your own creative boat, you could be setting yourself up to create a boring, unfulfilling day job of your own making, except now you have no one to blame but the boss –

*If you want to change the kind of work you're doing to be more consultative, or simply more infused with your style and point-of-view, then stop branding yourself as a Jane-of-All-Trades, able and willing to do it all. Frame up your offering, package, or product the way you want to be hired.*

Think about the places where you are sharing: your website, portfolio, and case studies, perhaps. Then think about your work out there simply speaking for itself – as your clients share with friends and peers, and people experience your work firsthand out “in the world.”

That’s a lot of eyeballs on what you’ve created and chatter about how you really helped someone. And that’s great! But if you were to go to those places and look at your own work with fresh eyeballs, would you see the kind of work you want to do more of? Or would you only see the kinds of projects you never want to do again? Would you hear past clients recommending a service that you don’t really want to be providing for very much longer? Do you wish they would describe it in a different way?

You might not feel this black-and-white about it. You probably have some well-loved projects and really stellar services you’re putting out there that you still feel really great about, but chances are there might be quite a few more that feel like the “old” you – and you’re ready for some “new.”

*You can keep the list of services, just let go of the a la carte mindset. When you brand yourself as a guide with a specific way of working, making, advising – it changes the way you see yourself, and how others see you, too.*

Or let’s say you’re a web designer. Your bread and butter has been doing small sites for small businesses, and most of them are small tech companies.

These businesses aren’t inherently bland, but you’ve realized whenever you create sites for makers with a more artisanal style – a baker, a herbalist, a woodworker – that you absolutely love your designs. But how can you get more of that kind of business when 75% of the work on your site or in your portfolio is techy-looking sites?

*It can be hard to carve out the time to create work or content that you want to become known for. Or you can't quite get paid yet for the work you'd really love to be doing. Treat it like a side passion project. Then turn it into the blueprint for how you always want to get hired.*

What if you're a life coach or wellness expert, but you've been working with one-on-one clients now for a few years and are ready to launch a product or course that can reach more people? What if you want to start speaking more, but you haven't been able to carve out the time to work on your talk, create your content or even really refine your pointy point-of-view?

But that's exactly what you need to do. You need to carve out some time (and usually that's just some mental headspace and some self-

set deadlines and goals) to either create the content that's going to take your brand and your expertise beyond one-on-one – or – to start shaping your one-on-one work to reflect how you want to be making, creating, consulting or guiding for your clients.

Get more of that handmade indie makerly feel into your website or your portfolio, even if it starts with a passion project on the side. Get your services language looking less like a bullet list of options and more like a comprehensive package. Or get cracking on the content you want to be sharing (and selling) beyond the one-on-one model.

Aim for showing 80% (if not 100%) of only work you love by the end of two years. Time flies when you're doing work you love!

## **FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // YOUR DREAM PROJECT:**

Use these next three pages to start sorting your favorite (and not-so-favorite) projects. You can think of projects like physical designs or deliverables you've created in the past – like the work you show in your portfolio. Or, if you provide a service that doesn't have a visual result, you can think of your "projects" as different kinds of offerings you've provided in the past or even specific client engagements. It's not about the client per se, it's more about what it felt like along the way. Were you on your game? Did you feel like an expert? Did you feel like you really helped them?

### **MY PROJECTS I ACTUALLY LIKE:**

*(not to be confused with love! that's the next page)*

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### **WHY:**

*(pick out your favorite bits of each)*

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*These "like it" projects could be shared on "the work" page of your site, or in your "dream" portfolio, but only if you think they help you: look more legit & get hired; OR can be refined enough to fit in the love column. Otherwise, feeling lukewarm about them? Cut them.*



## **FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // CONTINUED:**

If you're coming up short in the "love it" pages, then you know where you need to start directing some energy – and if you can't get paid for the kinds of projects you really love (yet) then try: a pro-bono project, a collaborative project, a personal project, or all of the above... as long as it's a project that's going to round out your dream portfolio.

### **MY PROJECTS I LOVE:**

*(you truly love the outcome, the process, or both!)*

### **WHY:**

*(talk them up! details + overall feel)*

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*These "love it" projects or client engagements should be the blueprint of how you structure your dream offering on the "how to hire me" page of your site, in your emails to inquiries, in your dream portfolio or case studies and absolutely in conversations with potential new clients. See if you can pair the visuals with: a testimonial quote; OR a few "before & after" bullets you can use as talking points. Avoid lengthy creative rationales, vague process or strategy descriptions, think mini-stories, examples and soundbytes.*

## **FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // CONTINUED:**

If the last page felt really great, ask yourself, “what if I only sold that kind of project or client package. What if I created a product? Like an ecourse or video series? The content would come out of those projects and engagements that you loved and really helped the client. But, what about the stuff you get hired for that you would stop doing if you could? Fill out this last page to see what you want to stop doing:

### **MY PROJECTS I CAN LIVE WITHOUT:**

*(you don't really care for these, even if you liked the client)*

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### **WHY:**

*(pinpoint what you don't like)*

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*Don't show these to anyone anymore – unless you just want to keep getting hired for future projects just like them. Yes, you may have worked hard on them, but if you don't like looking at them anymore, then let them go. If these were a particular offering, stop listing them on your services page. It doesn't mean you can't do them if someone specifically asks, (ideally as an add-on to the offering you really love) but you don't have to actively sell them anymore or feature them in your branding.*



THREE

*try to narrow in on*  
**YOUR DREAM  
CLIENT**

*Start attracting dream clients who gravitate to your passion projects, your style, and your point of view.*

You can break your rule and still take on projects that help pay the bills. But you can't "make an exception" to your rule, if you don't have one to begin with.



It feels good to get paid. But it feels great to knock the socks off a client – to make them cheer, or cry, or simply smile with this complete satisfaction and confidence in what you created for them or helped them achieve.

What doesn't feel great is if you just hit a wall at every step, you feel like expectations are completely off-base from each other, and in the end, even if they're happy, you're just happy to be done.

**You want to like your job.** And when you work for yourself, there comes a point where you have, in fact, created a job of your own making. You've settled down into your routines, settled into the flow of busy times and not-so-busy times, and you aren't as freaked that you'll never get another client again (but sure are grateful when you do!)

**You want to like your clients.** But here's the thing – liking your clients isn't about them being better clients, it's about you being more clear about your expertise and style from the start, and being a better guide along the way.

**How can you share your offering as a creative expert... if you don't know *yourself*?** Before you start listing off all the kind of clients you don't want – or even dreaming about the ones you do – start with you. What is the work you want to be doing? What are you best at? What is your style and voice? Because the real shift happens from being a “creative-for-hire” to a “creative-with-a-clear-purpose” when you are able to infuse your work, your actions, your content, and your offerings with what you're best at + what you know about your dream client: their pains, their wants, their personality, their dreams.

**How can you share your offering to your dream client... if you don't know *them*?** Okay, so now imagine your dream client. They may be someone you've worked with in the past – or just the kind of person (or project!) you'd like to work with in the future. How real can you make them? The more specific you can get, the more you can narrow in on your “people!”, the more “psychic” you'll feel when you're creating or guiding just for them – and the more enthusiastic approval you'll get along the way.

## **FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // MAKE THEM REAL:**

Imagine your dream client. They may be someone you've worked with in the past – or just the type you'd like to work with in the future. How real can you make them? The more specific you can get, the more you can narrow in on your tribe, and the more “psychic” you'll feel when working with their needs and wants.

My ideal client is most likely a \_\_\_\_\_ [ *job/profession/business* ] \_\_\_\_\_.  
They're about \_\_\_\_ [ *age* ] \_\_\_\_ old, and are  
\_\_\_\_ [ *personality trait* ] \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ [ *personality trait* ] \_\_\_\_.  
Let's call them \_\_\_\_\_ [ *name* ] \_\_\_\_\_!

They're stressed out about \_\_\_\_\_ [ *worry / roadblock* ] \_\_\_\_\_,  
but are proud of \_\_\_\_\_ [ *recent milestone* ] \_\_\_\_\_.

They value \_\_\_\_ [ *resource / trait / or commodity* ] \_\_\_\_\_,  
but really love \_\_\_\_ [ *resource / trait / or commodity* ] \_\_\_\_.  
So they trust others who \_\_\_\_ [ *do this / are like this* ] \_\_\_\_\_.

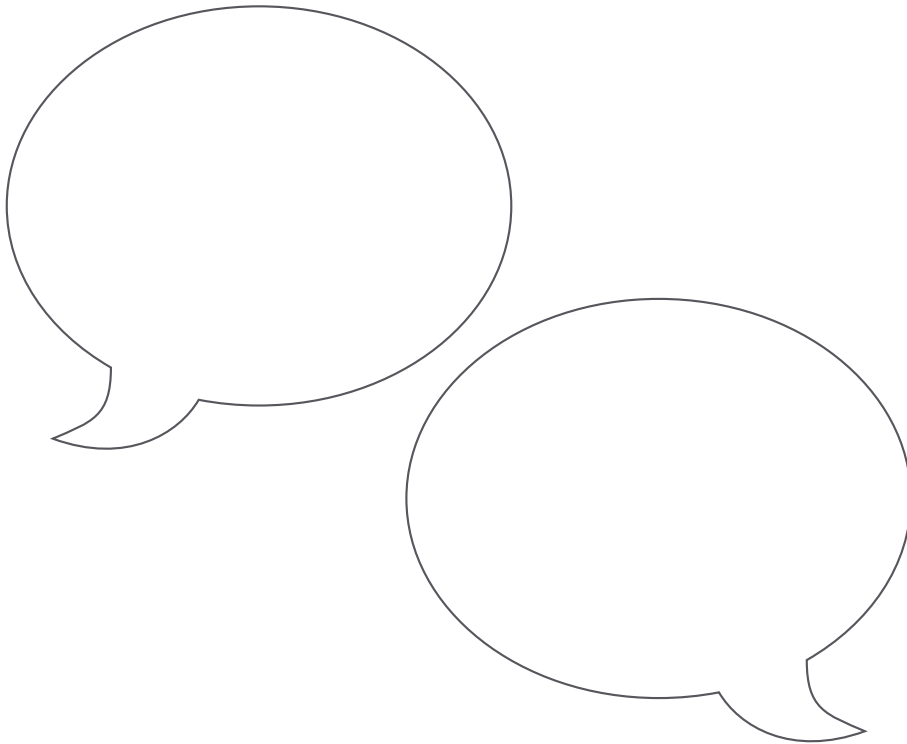
When we work together, they're happily surprised that I  
\_\_\_\_ [ *delivered / helped with this* ] \_\_\_\_\_,  
and together we \_\_\_\_ [ *created / built this* ] \_\_\_\_\_.

I love that this project added \_\_\_\_ [ *kind of style/content* ] \_\_\_\_ portfolio, content, or expertise.  
I want more work like \_\_\_\_ [ *project type* ] \_\_\_\_ for clients like these!

## FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // OVERHEARD:

You're eavesdropping on a conversation between two people who fit your dream client profile. Even juicier, imagine they are talking about you. Write two things you fear they might say in the left two bubbles. In the right two bubbles, write what you'd love to hear them say. Try to get specific. Gossip's no good without details!

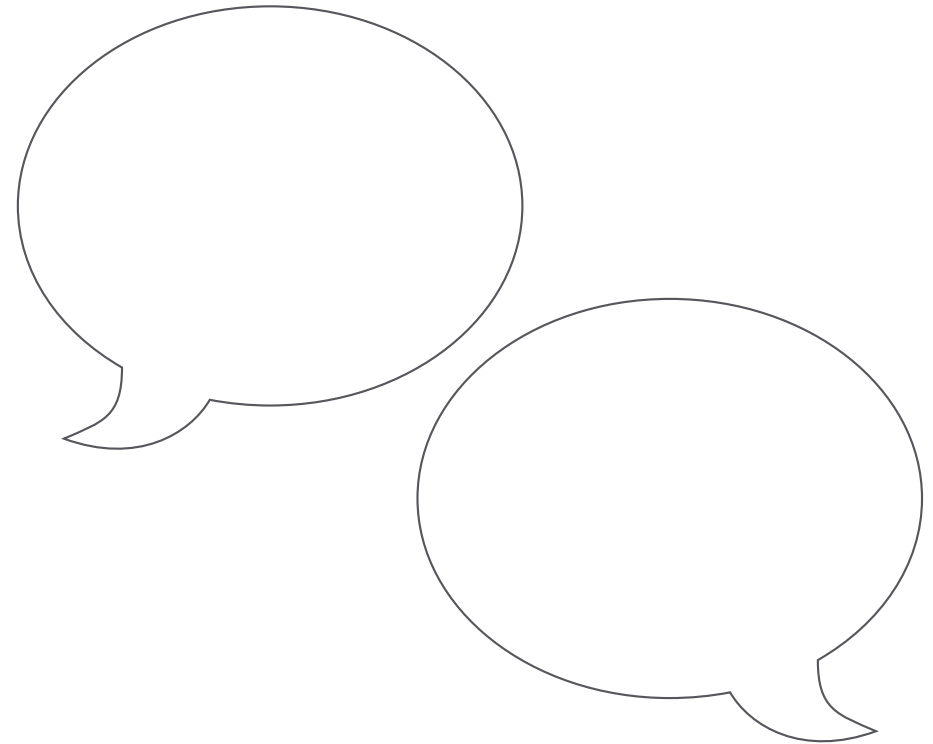
### FEAR:



*Ask yourself, "is this true?" Can you acknowledge these fears may not be grounded in reality, and "put them in a jar on the shelf?"*

*Or, if they do hit close to home, can you minimize them with action? List three to-do's this month that will help curb these fears, before they stop you from going after your dream clients.*

### LOVE:



*These are your fans! Everything you design and create (especially when you feel the self doubt creeping in) is for this enthusiastic and supportive audience. They want to see you succeed! Are there some to-do's you can create for them? A website update, a blog post, a new passion project you can share, a letter, an introduction?*



FOUR

**DEFINE YOUR STYLE  
POINT-OF-VIEW**  
*and declare it*



*As professionals and as creatives, we are taught to fit our style to the client and challenge at hand. But we're going to stand up and shout "we object!" Why? Because you're not an order-taker.*

Your process (more on that later), is what's going to reassure your client they'll get great work and a great experience. Your process is what gets you the collaborative input you need from your client. Of course, your work is created for *them*. But as you start sharing more of the work you really love, you'll attract attention for *your* aesthetic or approach.

Why not own that style of yours and become known for it?

It's no secret that at Braid, our specialty is branding, design, writing – or at least those are original tools in our own skill-set belt. So this observation is one that really applies to all the classic creatives out there (designers, photographers, copywriters, for example) but can still be a good reminder to coaches, consultants and other kinds of service-based entrepreneurs out there, too.

As creatives but also as professionals, we are so often trained to adapt our style to the task at hand. We are taught that the approach to each project should fit the challenge, and our own hand in getting there should leave no trace of our own point-of-view. Like creative chameleons, we are there to make our product or service fit the client's wants, needs, and desires.

But we're going to object to this one – just a little. Now before this ruffles feathers (which it does, oh my!), let us tell you why. You're not just a conduit with impeccable taste or amazing training, an impersonator of any style who also knows their way around (pick one) a laptop, a lens, a drafting table, a chef's table, a spreadsheet, a

yoga mat. Designers are not just pixel pushers, photographers are not just camera operators, writers are not just transcriptionists, nutritionists are not just diet coaches, and life coaches are not just a shoulder to cry on.

***You don't have to be a creative chameleon, erasing all trace of your own style or point of view, to create, advise, guide, and make – for others.***

Of course, we want to create (and create results) for our clients. But this should not be mistaken for operating on puppet strings. How do we balance approaching their wants and needs with respect and empathy – while still asserting our creative expertise?

Your creativity and your knowledge is how you serve. Your creativity is the gift you bring to the party. But what if you could be the kind of creative who's known for her really great signature style or her tough-love approach or

her unusually subtle yet instinctual approach? What if you could be that friend who doesn't necessarily stick to the line-item gift registry, but always gives the most thoughtful, unexpected, memorable, and personalized presents?

That's a gift in itself – to be able to create something that completely fits the person you're giving it to, but still has this quality that always reminds them of you. They may not even realize it, but the "you" is woven in there, and it's part of the reason they love it. You weren't just invited to the party to bring a gift, you were invited for what you bring to the mix.

*You weren't just invited to the party to bring a gift. You were invited for what you bring to the mix.*

We're not saying be a wildly unpredictable, loose cannon – "when she's great, she's great, but don't catch her on an off day!" We believe (strongly) in balancing this signature style point-of-view of

yours with a very logical and reassuring process. Your process is what gets you the collaborative back-and-forth you need from your client.

### **DECLARE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE**

Try this: Start claiming your words. What are the words that describe your ideal project or engagement? Your approach? Your personal style? Your aesthetic? Are you all about handcrafted? Or clean lines? Are you more dark and evocative or whimsical and vintage? Are you a listener? Are you a tough-love cheerleader? Are you a storyteller? Are you an advocate? It's hard narrowing in, and we know you aren't just ONE style, but we bet you could sum up your approach in just a few words if you really had to. Think of it like the desert island question: "if you were stranded on a desert island and could only work in this one style or approach for the rest of your life, what would it be?"

*Declaring your style is a small but mighty first step to becoming an expert who is sought out for their specialty.*

## **FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // STYLE SCRIPT:**

What if you could sum up your approach in a two-word “style” combo? “My style or approach is a mix of blank-meets-blank.” It could be the start of a conversation that really lets clients feel like they are working with a calm, cool and in control guide – who knows their style and what they’re about, but is confident enough in their approach to let clients in on the process, and flexible enough to adapt and refine the process along the way.

“My style is \_\_\_\_\_ [ *earthy* ] \_\_\_\_\_  
meets \_\_\_\_\_ [ *empathetic* ] \_\_\_\_\_.

So where you might see this is when  
I use \_\_\_\_\_ [ *one of your special skills here* ] \_\_\_\_\_,  
or I share \_\_\_\_\_ [ *one of your behind-the-scenes approaches here* ] \_\_\_\_\_.”

Then make it a little more collaborative, and share  
how you get inspired, and then how you in turn  
inspire or guide your clients:

“I draw inspiration from \_\_\_\_\_ [ *what fuels you to do what you do* ] \_\_\_\_\_,  
and I hope I inspire my clients to  
\_\_\_\_\_ [ *what fuels your clients / their results / after working with you* ] \_\_\_\_\_.”





FIVE

**LET YOUR  
CLIENTS IN ON  
YOUR PROCESS**

*(p.s. actually have a  
process & stick to it)*

Once you have a clearer vision for where you want to go, you know what kind of work you want to create and be known for, and the dream clients you want to attract – honing in on the steps of your process helps you become more of an expert because you will no longer just make it up as you go (or at the whims of the client). Sticking to a process isn't easy (at first). But once you start, you'll never go back.

The best part in the beginning? Now, you can show people thinking of hiring you, what it feels like to work with you. Your steps help you feel confident having "selling" conversations.

*There comes a point in a 'hire me' conversation where you shift from the sparkly and inspiring creative that attracted your dream clients in the first place, to the expert who simply explains what you do. How do you 'close the deal' and set the stage for working together, without feeling awkward or sounding salesy?*

**YOU SHARE YOUR STEPS.**

Do you have a process you follow? Are you taking the same steps every time? Are you showing your client? Are you letting them truly be a collaborative part of the process? Are you actually sticking to your method when you're all alone trying to figure out this design or deliverable or recommendation... "for reals?" Or are your steps just empty bullets on your website? Are these questions making you squirm just a little?

We aren't trying to process-shame you! We just get really passionate about this.

Creating a process for ourselves—our Braid Method, in fact—is how we were able to go from designers/writers for hire, to branding experts in lightening fast speed. Our first three months of business was taking on any client who would pay the bills, for any project we could write, design or brand. By the end of our first nine months of business, we were only working with dream clients (creative entrepreneurs working for themselves) who hired us for our specific branding process, not the whole kitchen sink or other one-off projects that we don't specialize in.

Now four years later we look back and ask: how would we ever have developed our ecourse, blog posts, podcast, and products – or shared our ebooks or email series, or continued to get hired by so many creative entrepreneurs from around the country and world (we're from the midwest you guys) if we didn't actually use the creative tools and steps we had already taken ten, then twenty, then fifty, and now more than a hundred times and counting for our own clients?

Even if you don't want to go quite as far as defining this all-encompassing creative process, wouldn't it just be nice to feel more in control of your client projects? Wouldn't it be a relief to be able to walk someone through your steps and what they get at the end with confidence, so you didn't have to sell so hard? But most of all, wouldn't it be so cool if instead of wondering where the next creative idea, blog post, or product launch was coming from as you sit in front of that blank page on the computer or in your journal, you would know that your process would not fail you and the answer would emerge?



*If a process feels empty or clinical to you, it may be because that's how you're thinking of it. It's not an assembly line. But if you aren't following any sort of framework at all, then we're going to ask you "why, oh why, are you recreating the wheel every time, for every client?"*

Your reasons for not following a set framework of steps might be:

*"Every client is unique!"*

*"Each challenge requires a custom solution!"*

*"Because that's what creatives DO, we create something new and fresh!"*

*"I'm not here to boss my clients or make them jump through hoops! I'm here to listen to, and help them!"*

All these answers are true. And no, you don't need a clinical or assembly-line style process. But you do need an approach, and a framework you always follow:

*"Yes, the client is unique, but you are that gentle but firm guide, who has been here before."*

*"Every new challenge should not feel like starting over from scratch. You are a specialist."*

*"New and fresh, is not created from nothing. You have a process. Even if you don't know it."*

You don't have to be winging it every time on pure gusto alone. You don't have to structure how and when you work, at the whim of the client. You can have a little structure! You can have a sane schedule that gives you work/life balance. You can feel like an intuitive, listening and collaborative guide, leading your clients down a path together (sure, with some course correction along the way) – but a path you know will create the best, most authentic, most loved outcome for you and your client.



**FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // YOUR PROCESS:**

When you hire me, here are the steps you can always expect, and how we (me the guide and you the client) will work together.

**STEP 1.** \_\_\_\_\_ [ name it ] \_\_\_\_\_

This is how you ALWAYS begin your process, typically this is a discovery, kickoff, some sort of fact-finding step with you and the client / rename it something short and sweet that fits your style above.

First we...

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*So briefly describe this step with a few details that paint a picture or give an example of the kinds of questions you might ask to get the info you need from your client, not everything, just a taste, shouldn't be more than three bullets, or one "stanza" long.*

**STEP 2.** \_\_\_\_\_ [name it] \_\_\_\_\_

This step might also include some research on your own, as well as recapping your most important findings, revelations, or ideas that came out of step 1. Give it a name that reflects this step above.

Then we...

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*A few details here, same rule as above, no more than three bullets, or one "stanza" long. Remember, this is you describing how you "go off" and get smart about what you do. You are not creating or consulting in a vacuum or on a whim, you are putting some thought and intention into the project at hand BEFORE you ever begin. Because you are an expert!*

**STEP 3.** \_\_\_\_\_ [ name it ] \_\_\_\_\_

This is how you take a moment to have a meeting, whether face-to-face, or online, to share your step 2 findings and inspiration with your client. This is where you show them where you're going with your direction or guidance, before you move on to creating the end result you were hired for! Let them have a voice now, and it won't feel one-sided later – it will feel like true collaboration.

Next we...

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*If you are a creative, this is where you can get really specific when asking for feedback: Which examples to do you like best? Do you like this aspect? Does the tone/messaging/vibe capture that fine balance between personal & professional you? How about this color palette/imagery/wording?*

*If you are a coach or consultant, this is where you can start to propose a plan for where you and your client are going to go based on what you've learned about them in Step 1 & 2. So this step goes beyond just 'the steps you always take' into the practices, tools and recommendations you're going to prescribe for your client (where the real work begins) before you start going down the path together.*

**STEP 4.** \_\_\_\_\_ [ name it] \_\_\_\_\_

This is how you “deliver” your final product. This is where you present your work, and you make it real for them! Show them the creative decisions you made, the “why” behind the work. Don’t be afraid to ask for what they don’t like. Chances are if you checked in with them in a really honest and equally specific way with step 3, step 4 is going to feel like a well-planned Christmas morning for your client. They should feel like they are opening the most thoughtful “present” from you. And with just a few tweaks, it will be even more perfect.

Finally we...

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*If you are a coach or consultant, you aren’t necessarily presenting a final product here, or even an end result, since so much of the work is ongoing. This final step for you might be a good place to outline a “before and after” for your clients when they get to this point of working with you. It would also be a great place to outline how you provide ongoing resources or follow-up support if that’s the case!*



**HERE'S THE THING ABOUT A PROCESS:**

Yes, it makes you sound like an expert, hooray!  
But it also helps you *become* a completely badass  
expert over time.

*When you stick to your process, you stay in the driver's seat – with the flexibility to collaborate and create together with your client along the way.*

If you can actually stick to those steps once you are working together with a client, and use these steps every single time, you will start to see the same patterns, the same stucks, the same challenges, and you will become a pro at identifying them and overcoming them for your client, in a total superhero-saves-the-day way vs. a begrudging back-and-forth client power struggle.



SIX

*don't forget to*

**TELL THEM WHAT  
THEY ACTUALLY GET**

So, obviously, we love process. We love getting hired for a complete “package,” not just a la carte design pieces. We love helping other designers go from order takers to experts who guide the client engagement. And we love helping coaches and consultants better express the journey they are going to take their clients on, so they trust them from the get-go. But just because you have a process, doesn't mean you aren't giving your clients concrete deliverables. They get real “stuff.”

Don't forget to tell them what they get.

*Don't undersell what you bring to the table, as a smart, strategic, authenticity-seeking creative. But beware overcomplicating or overproving your expertise, your specialty, or your steps – with too much talk, and not enough show.*

We all want to create authenticity and transformation. We all want to inspire. And we're all smart and strategic. You can use these phrases, of course! But don't muddy the waters of what you create for your clients at the end of the day. Don't skip over the most obvious reason your clients are hiring you, don't be afraid to say “website design,” “life coaching,” “wedding photography,” “copywriting,” if those are deliverables that you give your clients. You can't sell your process. You sell what they get from you.

## FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // YOUR OFFERINGS:

This fill-in-the blank exercise is a nice follow-up or intro into your creative process and steps.

You can hire me for one-on-one \_\_\_\_\_ [ a kind of one-on-one service ] \_\_\_\_\_  
or \_\_\_\_\_ [ another tier of that service ] \_\_\_\_\_:

### A

\_\_\_\_\_ [ name this ] \_\_\_\_\_:

(a package, product  
or grouping of offerings)

- includes \_\_\_\_\_

- includes \_\_\_\_\_

- includes \_\_\_\_\_

- takes \_\_\_ [ amount of time ] \_\_\_

### B

\_\_\_\_\_ [ name this ] \_\_\_\_\_:

(a package, product  
or grouping of offerings)

- includes \_\_\_\_\_

- includes \_\_\_\_\_

- includes \_\_\_\_\_

- takes \_\_\_ [ amount of time ] \_\_\_

### C

I work with

\_\_\_\_\_ [ dream client(s) ] \_\_\_\_\_

to help them

\_\_\_\_\_ [ accomplish this ] \_\_\_\_\_

so they get

\_\_\_\_\_ [ a real deliverable ] \_\_\_\_\_

and

\_\_\_\_\_ [ an end result ] \_\_\_\_\_.

*If you don't have a "second column" of services, keep all those details in column A. Then use column B to recap why dream clients hire you, for what kind of projects, topics or categories, and what they get at the end. If you have enough tiers or services to use both Columns A & B, but also really like Column C, then use all three!*





SEVEN

**BLEND YOU INTO  
WHAT YOU DO**

A personal brand is your outer layer. So yeah, it's your work style, but also your personal style – and even more than that, it's your voice. It gives clients (and readers) a promise of the layers underneath. Your personal brand is one of the best ways to build your business as a creative expert who shares what they know with others, so they want to learn more – and hire you!

*Your personal brand and your creative expertise have gotta blend into something a little bigger than just your craft. Expressing your personality + your deeper purpose will give you the freedom to grow into what's next for you.*

A creative working for someone else, in a firm, agency or even in-house at the typical 9-to-5 still has to follow the office rules. There is a “way” of doing things, whether interacting with your teammates or with your clients. There is a clear start and end to your day. And when the five o’clock rolls around, you go home, change into your “play clothes,” and relax into your own hobbies, friends, inside jokes, and the identity of who you are when you’re not at work.

But as creative entrepreneurs, the rules of personal vs. professional are different. The separation of work life and home life isn’t so clear, and many solopreneurs going out on their own for the first time can take a while to get used to this feeling – and the more rules, structure and corporate mindset they came from, the harder it is to get comfortable with this new blended work/life.

Many creative entrepreneurs don’t even come from super-corporate backgrounds or even super-strict educational institutions. But even if we don’t have to deprogram ourselves from

the formalities of a more corporate office-place, a lot of us have a hard time finding our own working style somewhere in between the mainstream idea of what it means to be “professional” on one end of the spectrum, and full-on free-spirit creative wildchild at the other. Like most things in life, one extreme or the other usually isn’t where we find our true blend.

For example, you might still feel like you’re breaking the rules if you use a curse word in a blog post, or ask for creative advice on a work-in-progress on Twitter, or share a personal story in your newsletter that gives your readers a glimpse into the not-so-glamorous reality of your creative journey.

The thing is, as humans, we are drawn to other people who we can relate to. Your clients and your followers will go with you if they can see themselves reflected in your story.

***Personal branding is really just sharing your story.***



Think about some of your favorite bloggers, podcasters, and creative entrepreneurs. What drew you to them in the first place? It probably wasn't necessarily the product they were offering or the topics of their blog. It was their angle, their special sauce, the blend of the story of who they are into what they do.

Braid started as a personal blog in it's own way. Kathleen's first blog readers followed along to watch the remodel and transformation of a new house, the story of a relationship and a journey to motherhood, and travel adventures. By the time posts about making the leap to freelancing made their way into the content, readers were more than excited to hear more of the professional side. Our most successful friends and clients aren't just sharing their expertise – they're sharing their stories. And their biggest fans love them because they're not only wicked smart and talented but because they're real and relatable people who are "in it" just like us.

But even if you're all aboard the personal blending train, you might be wondering how

much to share, when to share it, and whether or not it can actually help you grow your business. In our Braid Method Branding ECourse, we've devoted two whole lessons to blending your personal story into your personal brand and then sharing that story in a way that feels comfortable and authentic to you and your followers. Here are some of our favorite tips:

**Share an idea in progress.** Not only does this make your fans feel like they're part of something you're creating, writing or launching, but it's almost a call to the Universe to make this idea happen. You'll feel a little more accountable to actually make that idea happen, and you may even find that your fans offer ideas and support to help it happen as well.

**Share the process.** Especially as a creative entrepreneur, what you do doesn't necessarily come with an easy-to-understand job description, so sharing your process of your work shows your clients exactly what you do to help them and sets you up as a trusty guide.

**Share your work.** Go ahead and mix work and play on the same social media accounts.

When you finish a new project, share your excitement where people actually follow you—whether it's your “business” account or your “personal” account.

**Share real experiences.** Your readers love to hear about the success of your growing business, but do you know what they love even more? When you share stories about the struggle of the journey and some of the not-so-Instagram-worthy experiences. It's not because they want to see you fail, it's because more often than not, they can identify more with your struggle, and they feel special to be invited along for the genuine ride.

**Give advice.** Sharing what you know to your readers gives them that valuable, free content that will make them your fans for life. Not only are you helping them with problems they might be facing as well, but you're building up your own confidence and narrowing in on your expertise.



## **FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS // YOUR PERSONAL BRAND:**

Think of the different aspects of your personality. They might be the professional, the confident creative, the deep thinker, the shouter, the quiet soul, the organized multi-tasker, the life of the party, etc. Pick four of your own, if it helps to personify them, think of them as guests you'd invite to your own dinner party. They can be named after other people you admire, or simply archetypes:

### **GUEST 1**

Their name: \_\_\_\_\_  
They stand for: \_\_\_\_\_  
Their style is: \_\_\_\_\_  
Advice they would give: \_\_\_\_\_

### **GUEST 3**

Their name: \_\_\_\_\_  
They stand for: \_\_\_\_\_  
Their style is: \_\_\_\_\_  
Advice they would give: \_\_\_\_\_

### **GUEST 2**

Their name: \_\_\_\_\_  
They stand for: \_\_\_\_\_  
Their style is: \_\_\_\_\_  
Advice they would give: \_\_\_\_\_

### **GUEST 4**

Their name: \_\_\_\_\_  
They stand for: \_\_\_\_\_  
Their style is: \_\_\_\_\_  
Advice they would give: \_\_\_\_\_

The kind of advice, inspiration and behind-the-scenes I might share with these different aspects of my personality might be...

How to \_\_\_\_\_ and get inspired to \_\_\_\_\_  
from a \_\_\_\_\_ creative who is on my own path of  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
and sharing the behind-the-scenes of that journey with you!

**HOW CAN PEOPLE FOLLOW YOU? WHAT ARE YOU SHARING WITH THEM?**

I'm sharing these aspects of myself and these "gifts of knowledge" on platforms like:

**PLATFORMS I USE (FROM SOCIAL MEDIA TO NEWSLETTERS OR BLOGS):**

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*You don't have to do all of these sharing platforms, just because you think you should. If you could stop sharing on one platform, which would it be? If you could only share on one platform, which would it be?*

Need more structure or purpose to the posts you are sharing? Think of it this way. What if you wrote a book? Think of it as a step-by-step how-to book of your best advice to your dream reader, with a more personal intro that tells them your own story..." rest the same, like "What would the title be? The chapters? Then think of those as guides for how you structure content (like a loose editorial calendar of sorts).

**MY BOOK TITLE:**

**CHAPTERS:**

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Something magical happens when you start to really feel like an expert. It doesn't happen overnight, and you may find that you're the last one to adopt the "expert" title for yourself, but at some point you'll take a step back—after sending that final invoice to a client, after finishing your 85th logo or engagement shoot, after showing your client a moodboard and hearing that enthusiastic "YES!"—and you'll think, "Wow! I am really good at this!"

"But I'm so busy in the doing!" you might say. And yeah, the client managing, business managing and the work itself for sure, is a big part. But another part is **doing what creative & guiding experts do**. So we want to share with you our do-like-an-expert list—and if you're kind of at that "fraudulent feeling" stage where you're not quite ready to claim your expertise, you might find that you've got some of these items covered too:

**Creative & guiding experts explain, they don't sell.**

You can't have a business without a sales funnel because no matter how fabulous your services are, the idea that anything "just sells itself" is a lie. Guiding experts know this, but they also know that a stuffy sales pitch is not going to do them any favors either. So what do they do? They *explain*. Your clients want a behind-the-scenes peek, a glimpse into what drives you to create an amazing product, and a preview of the journey you'll take them on in your time working together.

*Guiding experts know that the sales process is really just a conversation—not polished and perfected, but genuine and transparent to really get that potential client to understand the process and connect with you and what you're offering.*

### **Creative & guiding experts predict and notice patterns.**

This isn't to say that each of your clients isn't a unique and beautiful butterfly, but when you're a guiding expert, you understand your dream clients before you've even met them. You'll begin to see which problems, worries, and frustrations are common among your favorite clients, and you'll be able to anticipate those same needs for similar clients moving forward. Experts see these patterns and connect the dots so they can produce more content that is even more specific to their dream clients. Once you're able to offer those specific solutions to those problems and concerns, the only thing they're thinking is, "Oh my gosh this person gets me! I need to work with them immediately!"

### **Creative & guiding experts earn enthusiastic approval.**

We've all had that client (or fear having that client) who after seeing the final logo, or reading the final copy, or seeing the final photography—just didn't like it. Cue: heart drop, irrational anger, and feelings of hurt and rejection.

Guiding experts know how to minimize the risk of ever getting to that disappointing place so late in the project, and instead get a response that's more along the lines of an all-caps, exclamation-point-expression of love and excitement. And it's not because they're better at what they do, it's because they know how to listen, adjust, and share the process along the way. By making your client feel like part of the process and be able to give you constructive feedback before you get too far in, you're able to take some of that pressure off the final reveal and receive that enthusiastic approval.

### **Creative & guiding experts have a process.**

You know when you finish a project that just felt so *right*? Your client was a dream, the process was smooth, and the result made your client excited and made you think *I wish every project could be just like this!*

Creative & guiding experts have figured out how to make all of their projects just like that one project. That's not to say they don't have a project that gets off track sometimes or only



produce a uniform product forever and ever, but they've developed a process to follow that helps streamline communication, smooth over any bumps, and maps out a timeline that's achievable. This process helps you work in the perfect conditions to create your best work, it helps your clients trust that you know what you're doing, and it gives you the confidence to continue to grow.

**Creative & guiding experts teach and share their knowledge.**

By sharing the knowledge that attracts their dream customers to them, creatives are setting themselves up as an expert in their field. They build trust not only by demonstrating that they know what they're doing, but potential clients feel confident that if the free content can add so much value to their lives, then the actual paid service will help them move mountains!

The more you can share what you know, either by giving it away or choosing to package and sell this content, the more you will build a tribe of built-in dream customers who are already learning from you.

## HOW TO START USING YOUR "7 WAYS" TO BRAND YOURSELF GUIDE:

**1. YOUR VISION:** Start talking about your business vision in conversations and share at least a half of it on your website homepage.

**2. YOUR WORK:** Create and show work you love, if that means doing it "on the side" so be it, but turn those projects into future client projects by creating a dream portfolio you can share.

**3. YOUR DREAM CLIENTS:** Get specific about the kinds of clients you want to work with. Tailor your content towards them - and start saying "no" to those who aren't a fit.

**4. YOUR STYLE & POINT-OF-VIEW:** Define and declare your style and point-of-view on your site and in conversations. You don't have to literally preach it in people's faces. But you can't be everything to everyone, either. It should show in your work, too. So look at those projects you love that are building your dream

portfolio and see if you can identify your style and point-of-view as a pattern or a thread throughout them all.

**5. YOUR PROCESS:** Stick with steps & use your creative process not only to help reassure your clients what to expect, but to also deepen your own creative expertise instead of recreating the wheel every time. See if you can create a couple project case studies that actually show how you followed those steps.

**6. YOUR PERSONAL BRAND:** People buy from people, so be sure you are using your own words, your own voice and your own personal style in how you present yourself as a professional. Remember - part of the dream of being your own boss, is getting to be yourself 100% of the time! So challenge yourself to blend more of who you are into what you do.





LESSON 1

Your Creative Expertise: Narrow Specialty

# THE BRAID METHOD

## A Branding ECourse for Creative Entrepreneurs

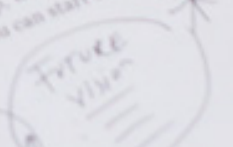
blend who you are & what you do, share & sell your creative expertise, attract your dream customers, make your business vision real

BY SHANNON & TARA STREET

YOUR PAST AND YOUR FUTURE OVERLAP TO BRING CLARITY TO WHAT YOU'RE DOING TODAY.

Let's get closer to your expertise. ... say "get closer" because there is no single, magic answer. But I will say that you can force yourself to get a little more narrow about what you want to do all day (which we hope is also one of the things that you're best at). ... you can set yourself up to at least be working from that genius place ... say, 78% of the time in this dream job you're creating for yourself. ... first exercise in this lesson is going to help you see the connections where you've been and where you are going - as an expert.

Focus to be found in the overlap of your past and future. ... most challenging, brand exercises is called ... and Future. It's a way to look at the overlap between ... and your future vision using a Venn diagram (you know, ... that come from that creative-expertise place - or at least ... closer to that creative-expertise place. ... a vision-to-action tool - the overlap can help create ... to focus on in the present day, when you have all the ... don't know which one to tackle first. But there's also ... in the overlap, which is what we're going to focus on ... that clarity before you can start creating action steps.



The Steps You Always Take

Rules For Taking O



# BRAID CREATIVE

*a branding agency*

*Business visioning & personal branding for creative entrepreneurs who want to be seen, heard and hired as the experts they want to become.*

If you're interested in working with us one-on-one, our Braid Method is how we do it! You'll get a customized inner roadmap to your brand and business vision, and a completely developed Brand Platform, including logo, layered and textured imagery and graphics, brand headlines, brand story, how-to-hire me messaging, and fully-designed sales slides for those selling conversations.

If you're not quite ready to work one-on-one, but want to try The Braid Method for yourself, check out our Braid ECourse with in-depth lessons, tons of worksheets, audio recordings, seasonal webinars and access to a community of fellow Braid ECourse students to share comments, questions and insights.





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