

SECTION I



Find It Within You



You are unique. But you knew that. Did you also know you are uniquely marketable? You just need to learn how to express your unique personal brand as a Real marketable business brand. Unabashedly. Powerfully. You can do it. As a woman entrepreneur, you occupy a special position. If you can capture your essence, and express it through everything you do in your personal and business life, you will bring a richer, more sincere, and sustainable message to the business community.

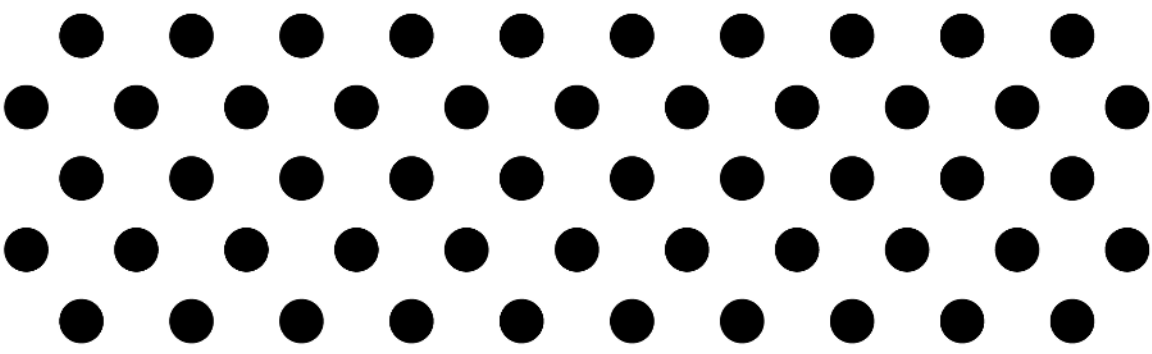
That's the premise of the first three Real Facts of *Real You Incorporated*. Once you can discover and love your personal brand, you can launch it as a real brand, one that is powerful and different from a man's. The process for bringing the true you to the surface is one we'll cover in the first section of the book. We'll unlock the true you. Your passions. Your personal brand essence. Why? Because these qualities and values, loves, and desires aren't distinct from you as a businesswoman, even though traditional corporate business customs and protocol teach the opposite. For generations, businesswomen have been forced to fit in. Eliminate their feminine traits. Act like a man to get ahead. That's not real. And it's not sustainable without a lot of personal angst.

After reading Section One, you'll be able to articulate your personal brand. Clearly. Proudly. You bring a unique perspective to the world. It needs to be shared fully, not compromised by traditions and structures outside of you. Once you've found it within, and documented it on your chart, you can take steps to create the world you want to work in. The second section will explain how to leverage your competitive advantage.

With *Real You Incorporated*, you are doing more than reading a book. You are creating a tangible vision of your personal and business world—and how they come together in a powerful, unique way. If you're an entrepreneur already, documenting the Real You throughout the first section of this chart will prove to be an invaluable experience. If you're just getting started on

realizing your dreams, the RYI chart will provide a road map for you and your new business. Display it proudly; refer to it often. Many women find the central core of their chart remains the same over time—you, your passions, and your brand essence. What may shift is the business expression of your brand. If you sell your company, merge with another, or start an entirely new business, your competitive advantage layers will change a bit.

But the *you* at the heart of it all will remain the same. Understanding your personal brand—embracing it—and your personal power are the focal points of this section. Here, you will complete the first three circles of the RYI chart: you, your passions, your brand essence. Let's get started.



*At the center of your being you have the answer;
you know who you are and you know what you want.*

Lao Tzu





REAL FACT #1

It All Starts With You

It all starts with you—and your dreams. That's what got you thinking about owning your own business in the first place. Like me, you want to do it right. You want to make a difference. You want to call the shots. And we're not alone. Women are starting their own businesses at twice the rate of men, leaving corporate jobs because of inflexibility, frustration with the good old boys' club and the glass ceiling, lack of creativity in the workplace, and pure boredom. And many young women aren't even entering the corporate world at all, choosing to embrace their inner entrepreneur from the get-go.

To discover the true entrepreneur in you, it's all about being real.

Real (r ' l) adj., being or occurring in fact or actuality; having verifiable existence. Hence the name of the book, *Real You Incorporated*.

It means to be genuine, truthful, and authentic with nothing fake or contrived in everything you do from creating your positioning statement to hiring employees to help you realize your dream.

Real You Incorporated is a book about empowering women in business, specifically women entrepreneurs. If you're one of these women, kudos. But if you're still an executive working for someone else, *Real You Incorporated* can help strengthen your personal brand, crucial in today's business world. Because once you discover and love your personal brand, you can bring your business to the market as a real brand, one that is powerful and distinct from a man's. Within these pages, you'll find some business self-help advice, a bit of work-life balance sharing, and naturally, a little memoir to set the stage. But predominantly, this is a book about women and celebrating their natural entrepreneurial bent.

After reading *Real You Incorporated*, you will better understand your personal brand and be able to deliver a more sincere, sustainable, and richer business concept to the world. Keep in mind that interconnectivity and integration are the key notions today. You are a brand. The company you create is a brand. When the essence of each—you and your business—are in alignment, you create a real brand.

In this Real Fact, you'll begin to create your RYI chart. You'll fill in the first layer of the circle as you work through this fact: It all starts with you. As you work your way through the book, you will begin to create a unique, customized visualization of your business. Along the way, I'll provide personal examples as illumination, and I'll enlist the help of some real entrepreneurial women to share their experiences, too.

In this Real Fact, you learn about the following:

- ◆ Your future starts now
- ◆ Learn from your past
- ◆ Describe yourself in one word

Life Lesson One: Your future starts now

And it's okay to grab it. The premise of *Real You Incorporated* is that you, as a businessperson and a woman, want an authentic, transparent, dynamic, relevant, and real brand. Both personally and for the company you are creating. You want and deserve the right to follow your dreams in a uniquely feminine way with enthusiastic pursuit. Women do have more choices than ever before. The problem today is: What choice is right? For you—not for your neighbor, your co-worker, your spouse, or your mom. For you. And I'm not talking about an unbalanced approach to your business goals. Nope, that can be risky. As with anything else in life, the time can come when you turn around and realize a single-minded focus on your career can feel a lot like being a one-dimensional person. Not good. Not interesting. Not fulfilling.

The key to having a rewarding business is having one that speaks to your inner strengths, bolsters your passions, and engages your heart. That doesn't mean you need to default to a traditionally feminine career, although those careers are right for some. It simply means that you follow your instincts and your intellect, use all of your skills, and do it in a uniquely you way. All the while realizing there still aren't a lot of road maps.

It takes a combination of instinct, experience, and confidence to build a real brand. It takes the same to build a real life. It's not without constant redefinition and integration, both of the people around us, and ourselves. As a 40-something woman, I find myself looking in the mirror and realizing with no uncertainty that I will continue to redefine my life, my brand, and my work. It won't be like my mother's (just as I constantly joke that this book won't be like one written by my father), and it won't be like yours. But if my company plays to my true self, encompasses my passions, fuels my need for power, rings true to my customers, allows me the flexibility to share my gifts with the community and be there for my husband and kids, I'm happy, and always growing.

It's not about having it all; it's about having what you want. And it's never really been about a work-life balance. It's more about integrating work and family with your personal goals. It starts with knowing yourself and your definition of fulfillment. Next, you need to funnel your natural and sparkling ambition into creating a business that makes your heart sing. And, let's not forget, makes your wallet heavier. Women are notorious for not leveraging their worth in business, not asking for, or worse, minimizing their value. Real brands don't do that because they have confidence in their worth. Your real company can and should have monetary value to you, as well as personal meaning, all the while allowing you to integrate the people in life who are important to you.

It's never too early or too late to create your own personal real brand. You can start the building blocks right now, in whatever stage of your career you find yourself. Your life, up to this point, has helped you plot a course toward entrepreneurship, even if you didn't know that! And if you're already an entrepreneur, begin now with *Real You Incorporated* to reinvigorate your existing company by following these life lessons and action steps, and by learning from the real stories of successful women entrepreneurs.

What does it mean to be real? It means your values and your personality are in sync with your business operations and its people. It means you surround yourself with people who think and act like you—true believers—inside and outside of the workplace. It means you nurture your passion with a network of mentors, friends, and activities. It also means you reach out and give back—empowering other women, just like you've been empowered.

At the heart of it, a real brand is about creating the business and life you want by designing a conscious culture of your choosing. If you're in business, you have a culture and an identity. *Real You Incorporated* will help you define and refine it.

Women are pulled in multiple directions. Before you can build your personal brand and company, you need focus. Step back, put aside the demands in your life, clear the mind clutter and take

time to focus on you, your goals, where you're going, and where you want your business plan to go. Get in touch with your feelings, so you can act on them. Get a pencil and paper or have your computer handy, so you can write or type your thoughts. Be prepared to record them for reflection now and later.

Make time for yourself, because your future starts now.

To get your creative juices flowing, envision a blank canvas in front of you. There are no directions or guidelines, just wide open spaces.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What does being real mean to you? What could you do to be more true, genuine, authentic?
2. Are you real? In your everyday life, at work, at home, or do you change personalities and play different roles in different settings?
3. Can you allow yourself some time to think, plan, and dream?

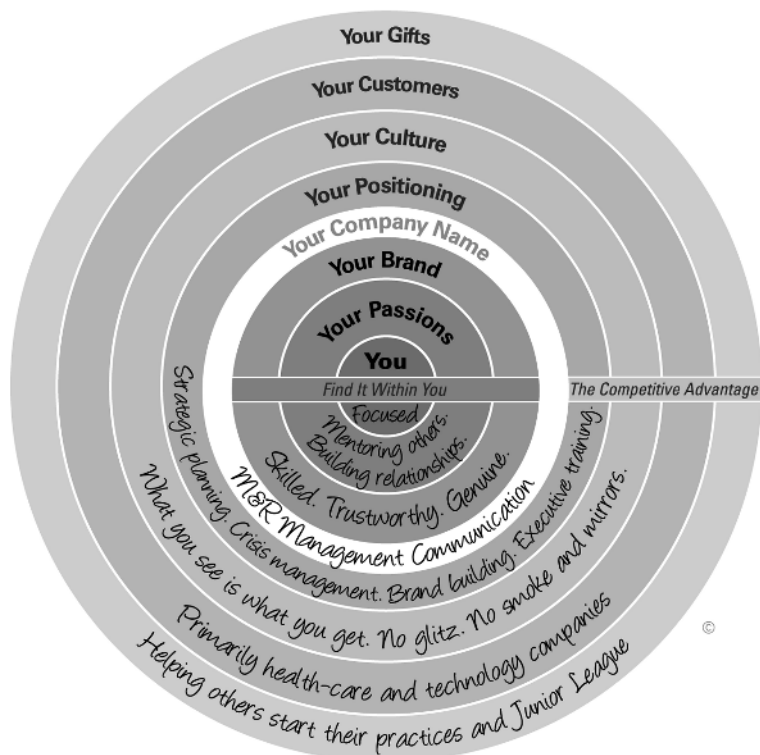
ACTION STEPS

1. Take time to get organized. You will be filling out the RYI chart, but you'll also be bubbling up some ideas you'll want to record.
2. Take a break. If you can, head to the hills, the ocean, or just a hotel for a night or a weekend, by yourself. This is tough, especially if you're a parent. But you are allowed to have some guilt-free alone time. It's vital.
3. Allow yourself to think big, be ambitious. This is your life, so get it right.

A Real Story

Marilyn Marr

Meet Marilyn Marr, born in 1951, communications firm owner, M&R Management Communication, LLC. Business owner since 1995.



I started my public relations counsel practice in 1995 (age 44) after 23 years in public relations. Actually, the practice was meant to be a stopgap—a way for me to cover my share of the household expenses while I earned my gemology certification (primarily through home study courses) from the Gemological Institute of America. My plan was to establish a custom jewelry business. But as soon as I left, I started getting calls from people I'd worked with over the years. After a short while, I realized it wasn't a new career I needed, but a new environment. That's when I knew my future was about to begin.

Without even sending out an "I'm open for business" letter, my workload took off. I got so busy, I never got around to completing the gemology coursework. Being real for me meant trying something new. I never saw myself as the work-by-yourself, entrepreneurial type, but when I headed down that path, I realized it was one of the best things I'd ever done. The lesson here is that sometimes where you're supposed to be or to venture isn't always obvious. I enjoy the flexibility (such that it is) and being responsible only for myself, rather than a staff. About three months after starting my practice, I had an ah-ha moment. It suddenly dawned on me that the reason I felt so unusually calm—even though I had no guaranteed paycheck—was that for the first time in years, I was not trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my career. My future was clear, and that was a great feeling.

Marilyn's future started the moment she took a chance on herself. At the time, she thought she needed a new career, but what she discovered was the joy of being her own boss in a profession she loved. Marilyn's story demonstrates how ah-ha moments reflect light on the real you waiting to become. Becoming real, true to yourself, is a process, and it's never too late to start.

RECOMMENDED READING

- ◆ If you haven't read it for a while, or ever, pick up a copy of *Gift from the Sea* by Anne Morrow Lindbergh. Since 1955, when it was originally printed, the quiet and reflective prose of this remarkable woman allows you to contemplate your own definition of happiness and creativity. Relax with it as you realize the future is now.

Life Lesson Two: Learn from your past

As I mentioned earlier, there's no perfect time to create your own personal brand. It can happen at any point during your career. Up until this time in your life and from here on out, you have been building your identity. And, as we all know in life, you gain strength through adversity. All of your past experiences—good, bad, and ugly—along with the people you've chosen to love and befriend, have made you who you are today.

It's vitally important for you to have an accurate view of yourself—you cannot brand yourself correctly without it. And while there are any number of self-help experts, books, and the like to help you get to know yourself, you can do it on your own.

Your history—with all of its highs and lows—is part of your essence.

Your prejudices come from inside. Your likes and dislikes. Your management style and so much more. It's time to reflect. As I look back, my life today is a true reflection of and reaction to my past—and the basis for who I am.

Lucky for me, I was raised to believe women could do anything. My father, a marketing professor and author, who later became a high-profile business consultant, encouraged me to aim high and be my own boss. My mother had a huge influence, too. They held themselves to high standards and raised the bar high for my siblings and me, too. I had a very traditional 1950s upbringing in the heart of the 1970s. I was raised by a father who was the first in his family to graduate from college—who went on to earn a Ph.D.—and a mother who moved from her parents' house, where she lived during college, to her first home with my dad. Together, they created the American dream they were taught to find.

My drive and ambition came from my overachieving father, and my mom, whose home was run more efficiently than any corporation. She was every bit as accomplished as my father, just in a different setting. When I think of my mom, my memories growing up are full of perfectly prepared and artfully presented meals. Immaculate gardens. Room parents and PTO. Crafts. And a sparkling home, all part of a full and privileged life of country clubs and tennis matches in the suburbs. And while I ended up creating a family literally five miles away in the exact same suburb, my interpretation is wholly different from hers. Not better or worse, just absolutely different, yet certainly a reflection of her. I took all of her attributes—commitment, dedication, and perseverance—and applied them to a life that is real for me, one full of home and career.

With an English degree from Vanderbilt University under my belt, I began pursuing a writing job.

In my first full-time job after college, I worked as a reporter and started what turned out to be a popular column covering the advertising and communications industry. It was a chance to combine two passions—writing and marketing—and to rub

shoulders with agency principals. I wrote about their campaigns and attended memorable martini luncheons while learning journalism and a bit about advertising at the same time.

When the behavior of my editor made the newsroom unbearable, a co-worker and I approached the publisher. She told me I should move on, and so I did. I had learned a lot in my first job. Unfortunately, there would be many more bad boss stories in my future. But with each one of them, I learned a little more about myself and about what I would strive to create when I started my own company. At my first advertising agency job, one of the principals stood at the door every morning, exuding every bit the pompous character he was, to make sure everyone arrived on time properly dressed (which meant to him skirts only). Meanwhile, a photo of his bikini-clad secretary adorned his desk. I was making the best of a bad situation when one of the account managers, my boss, left to join another, bigger firm in town. I had nothing to do with the move, yet I was fired between Christmas and New Year's Eve. I was told my work, which up until that time had been great, was unsatisfactory.

When the unexpected happens, don't panic. Every set-back is an opportunity to open another door, discover another path.

Keep your eyes open for them. And, remember, you learn more from bad experiences than good ones. In my case, one bad boss experience led to an interview and then a sales job at an urban contemporary radio station. I'll never forget the incredulous look the sales manager, Bill Brooks, gave me during my interview. He showed me a stack of resumes of people who had tons more sales experience, but I persuaded him to take a chance on me. I was able to translate my status as the only Caucasian and woman on the sales team to success by landing major mainstream advertising

accounts for the station. Little did I know—yes, every setback is an opportunity—that radio is the perfect venue for learning the ins and outs of advertising, and commission sales is a great way to toughen up.

So don't be afraid to walk away when the going gets tough, and remember to breathe if experiences don't work out the way you planned. I never would have met Bill if the newspaper job hadn't become unbearable. And I wouldn't have tested the safety net of my first job. I bet you have similar stories.

As you're moving forward with your entrepreneurial dreams, remember it's important to take a look back. Learn from your past. It's chock-full of important information. Pursue your dreams head-on with stealth determination, but be prepared to shift gears at any moment, sometimes quickly.

Writing my history for this book really helped me to crystallize the key work experiences in my life, the ones that made me who I am today. Yours have, too. The good, the bad, and the really bad. Taken together, they are your history and the source of your reactions to events taking place today. If you wonder about certain idiosyncrasies and behaviors you default to, check your rearview mirror for the answer. It's there. Now think about the questions that follow and complete the action steps.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Remember a formative setback you've had, personally or professionally. How can you use the memory of this experience as you build your plan for the future?
2. What are your greatest professional accomplishments to date? Start by thinking about your first job and your very first boss. What's a takeaway?

3. Reflect upon the feelings associated with these experiences from your past. Commit them to memory and keep them handy as reminders of how strong *you* have become.

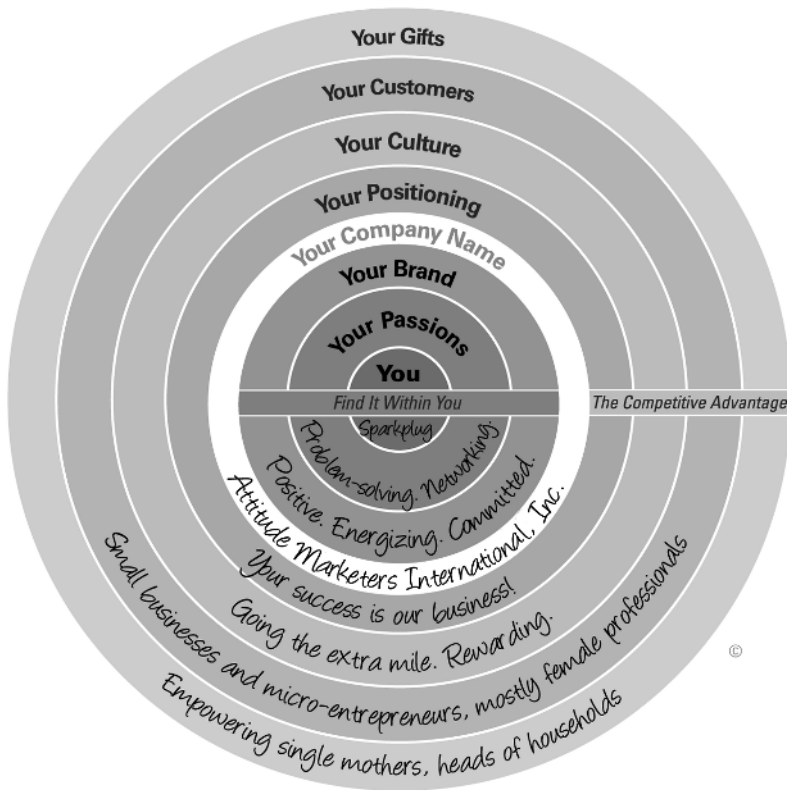
ACTION STEPS

1. Create a list of characteristics you find positive about previous work experiences. Next, list the negative attributes. What are your most resilient attributes—flexibility, determination, confidence? These are important, too. If you aren't a writer, that's okay. Get someone to help you. That's a lesson you'll learn later in the book: Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.
2. Write your life story. With every experience, you grow. What have you learned from all of the jobs in your past? If you're like me, you've had too many to write about each one in depth. The key is to remember what aspect of each job or career helped make you who you are today. Control and edit yourself by limiting the length to two pages, 500 words max. This doesn't have to be manuscript quality. It's for your use. Again, if you aren't a writer and are struggling to get it down, ask for help.
3. Take the information you've generated here and condense it. If you can, create a short, one paragraph version. You in a snap shot. There is no getting out of this one. It's your resume, in paragraph form. You can do this.

A Real Story

Connie Spruill

Meet Connie Spruill, born in 1950, president and owner of Attitude Marketers International, Inc., a people and business development company. Business owner since 1983.



In 1976, before I started my first business in 1978, I worked briefly for a lumber wholesale broker. The third generation had just taken over ownership, and I was the secretary who held down the fort while the young boss spent time on the golf course and doing other extracurricular activities. Even though I was going through a divorce and had two small children, for 18 months I had a chance to learn the lumber wholesale company from the ground up. When a spot opened up for a senior salesperson within the company, of course I applied for it. I didn't get it. They hired some jock who sat around and listened to ball games on his radio and didn't know the difference between a stick of wood and a stick of celery. When I approached my boss to ask why I didn't qualify for this position, his answer was like a slap in the face. He said: "He has a family to support." The guy was 23 years old, married, and his wife was pregnant. I guess my two daughters were seen as pups instead of human beings, and my sales were accidents. At the end of the year, the new and experienced salesperson got the bonus I thought I deserved, and I got a \$20 necklace. Well, three weeks later, I was in my own office (thanks to the help of a friend), wholesaling lumber to all the customers that I dealt with at the other business. My customers stayed loyal to me. A year later, the old company went out of business.

What did I learn? I control my destiny. I didn't have to know everything about the business or industry, I just had to know people who did and form an alliance. If I can learn how to bid for million-dollar construction supply jobs and get them shipped to job sites on time and do it all without a bank line of credit, I can do anything. During the time I was in construction, I founded a trade organization called the Association of Business and Professional Women in Construction. I discovered that I enjoyed training and mentoring other

women to follow in my path and become business owners, especially in male-dominated industries. I launched my next company, Attitude Marketers International, in 1983 to do just that.

I think entrepreneurs are a unique type. Many of us morph our services according to our need for a new challenge. My brand has always centered on my expertise to satisfy needs of professional women, women business owners, and those who seek to be either. I can sell feng shui, business development expertise, and counsel in career transitions and financial life planning for all phases of a woman's life. I have not done all of these things at the same time, but as my female market changes, I change my service and products to meet the need. This includes obtaining any licensing, education, and credentials to satisfy the need. Through all of my work experiences and life experiences, I've learned. But my personal brand stays the same. It's me. A really savvy entrepreneurial woman will know this. The target market won't care how many things you have been involved in, only that you take care of them as they move along. Keep your personal brand visible. Learn from your past, and help it to propel your future.

If you sat down with Connie and talked to her about her life and her many challenges—including the strength to leave an abusive husband even though it meant homelessness, raising two small daughters on her own, and eventually becoming a successful entrepreneur—you would find a woman who not only learned from her past, but grew stronger with each bad experience. Her story is a perfect example of facing negative life experiences and growing stronger and more powerful because of them.

RECOMMENDED READING

- ♦ *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan is a must-read. Talk about a look into the past that will remind you of how far we've come, and how far we still have to go. It's a classic, and so are you, no matter your age.

Life Lesson Three: Describe yourself in one word

Now that I've shared a couple of my important life lessons and you've read a couple of real stories from other women, it's time to shift the focus to you. As I said at the beginning of this Real Fact, building a business begins with you. And, please remember, you are the creator of your business, but you are always a distinct essence apart from it, too. It doesn't matter whether you're creating a sole proprietorship or a huge enterprise with lots of employees. You want to be the heart of it, but it's not the same as you. The first layer of the RYI chart is the one word you will use to sum up yourself. Just one. That's it. Can you describe yourself in a word?

Get started with a simple exercise, which we'll revisit and enlarge as you move through the book. Follow the example presented at the beginning of the Real Fact.

Make a circle, with the word *you* in the middle, and begin the search for the one word that defines you.

The one word you can replace the word *you* with. Think of it as zeroing in on your essence. Think about yourself in the past and where you are now, and blend them together. It's difficult, but it's

essential. Remember this is a process. And not everyone sees you in the same light. If it helps, capture the essence that also relates to your work style. After all, we are starting a business here. Here are some steps to help you.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Have you ever had a nickname? There are truths to be found there. Mine was spaz, by the way. (Okay, don't repeat that!)
2. What are you really good at and why?
3. What are your downfalls?

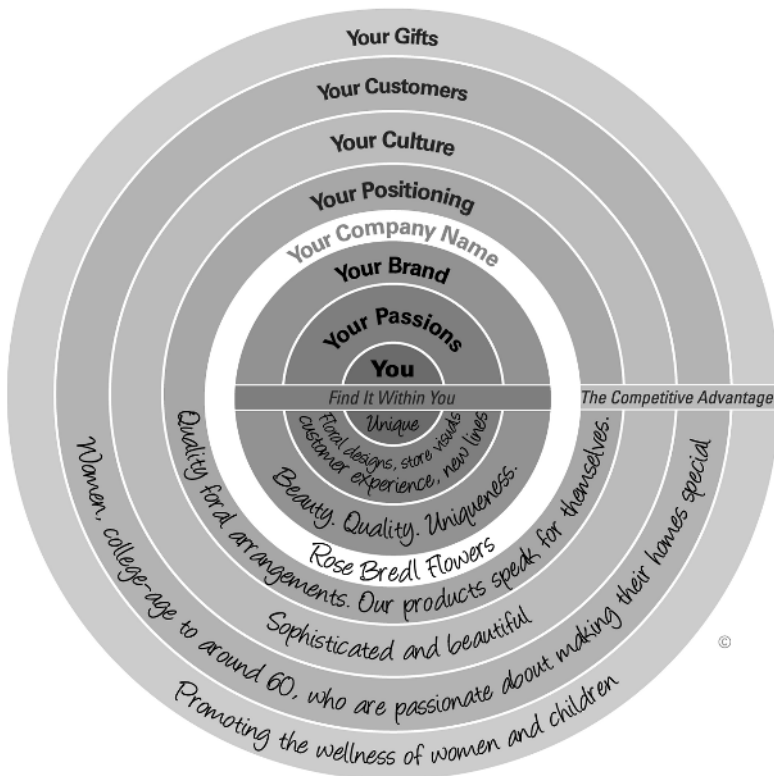
ACTION STEPS

1. If your defining word isn't clear to you, call or e-mail as many people as you know and trust—a close friend, your spouse—and ask these folks to describe you in as few words as possible.
2. Once you've narrowed down your list of words to five, bounce them off the people you trust. You are trying to find the essential word that best describes you. After working on the process myself, my word is energetic. What is yours?
3. Write your defining word in the first layer of your RYI chart (a blank chart is located at the back of the book or draw your own as we move along. Visit realyouincorporated.com for an interactive version).

A Real Story

Mary Ernst McColgan

Meet Mary Ernst McColgan, born in 1967, owner of a floral design company, Rose Bredl Flowers. Business owner since 2004.



My real word is unique. I come from a family of gardeners, especially on my mother's side of the family. I even named my company after my grandmother. I combined that family passion and my experiences working for a number of national retail chains—Estee Lauder and Abercrombie & Fitch among them—to create my business. I knew that with my background and drive, I would be successful as an entrepreneur. That, plus my eye for perfection and quality and a strong customer service background, gave me a lot of confidence.

If my company walked down the street, it would be sophisticated and beautiful. It would stand out from others because of its quality and uniqueness. It's about style, and treating each customer as if they're your one and only. It's about the services we offer and the products that we use. All hand-selected from artisans across the country and other parts of the world. We refuse products that are mass-produced. Again, it's about quality and beauty.

We encourage customers to be hands-on. It's okay for them to get their hands dirty. That's our store and our brand, and those customers will make my company stand out. I believe our store and products speak for themselves, and our customers recognize the quality and work that goes into everything we do. My business is unique, like me.

While Mary knew her real word right away, it may take you longer to settle on yours. That's okay. It's the heart of your RYI chart, and it's important to get yours right.

RECOMMENDED READING

- ◆ *amBITCHous*: (def.) a woman who: 1. makes more money 2. has more power 3. gets the recognition she deserves 4. has the determination to go after her dreams and can

do it with integrity by Debra Condren, Ph.D. Read it, and you may be inspired to choose it as your real word.

So far, we've established that it's all about you, and we've outlined the first life lessons to help you get started:

- ◆ Your future starts now
- ◆ Learn from your past
- ◆ Describe yourself in one word

Now it's time to move to the next layer of your RYI chart: Your Passions.

