

BRANDING LIKE A BOSS B!TCH



THE WOMAN'S PLAYBOOK FOR BUILDING A BRAND
THAT OWNS THE ROOM

V. Helena

ADVANCE PRAISE

for 'Branding Like a Boss B!tch'

“V. Helena conducted a thorough brand evaluation that gave me the clarity and direction I needed to elevate my business to the next level. Her winning marketing tools and social media strategies transformed how I connect with our clients and tell our design story with confidence, intention and purpose. This book is a gem for anyone needing a brand and marketing boost!”

— CHRIS BRANCH, FOUNDER & CEO, INTERIORS BY CHRISTINA

“V. Helena is extremely talented. She has keen insight that helped me develop and grow my business from identifying my brand to producing media for our website and social media presence. Her commitment to excellence and unwavering support is what I admire the most...”

— SHIFU DOOKIE, OWNER, LOTUS TAI CHI

“V. Helena has played a major role in helping me shape not only my brand, but also my vision. Through her guidance, encouragement, and honest conversations, she challenged me to think deeper about who I am, what I stand for, and what I want

to build. Her support has taken my brand further than I ever imagined.”

— JEFE DAHOOD PREACHER, MEDIA INFLUENCER AND RECORDING ARTIST

“V. Helena has amplified the Kunta Kinte-Alex Haley Foundation’s mission and expanded our reach in ways we could not have achieved alone. She keeps us focused not only on our mission but also on our brand, who we are, what we represent, and how best to make a statement that stands out. Her strategic approach to branding and marketing helped bring our family heritage and genealogy initiatives to life with the focused precision, professionalism, and cultural reverence that our legacy demands. She’s a visionary producer and brand strategist whose work speaks — and delivers — for itself. She has been a true difference-maker for the Foundation.”

— PATSY BAKER BLACKSHEAR, PH.D., KUNTA KINTE-ALEX HALEY FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND AUTHOR, *CELEBRATING AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE PIONEERS*

Branding Like a Boss B!tch
The Woman's Playbook for Building a Brand
That Owns the Room

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Print information available on the last page.

isbn: 978-1-6987-2186-6 (sc)

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Trafford rev. 07/24/2026

www.trafford.com

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toll-free: 844-688-6899 (USA & Canada)

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For my nieces —

*Felicia, Samantha, Kimberly, Ariel, Malaika, Tylar, Jade,
Madison, Brooke, Camille, and Gabrielle.*

*May you each build a brand — and a life — the world can't
ignore.*

Take up the whole room. It was always yours.

...and to

My Dad, William Hall Sr.,

who continues to be the wind beneath my wings.

(June 24, 1935 – December 24, 2025)

Make the customer the hero of your story.

— ANN HANDLEY

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Hey Girl, Hey! So, you're ready to uncover the secret of how to put your image, product or service front and center for the people who count? I got you. I promise it isn't rocket science and you may even find within the pages that you already have an idea of how it's done and just need a push, a kick in the bum, or affirmation to go get it. What's the point of creating something great that nobody knows about?? Why hide your light under a bushel?

Ann Handley laid it out perfectly on the previous page, but here's the translation for the newbies: **Your brand should not be the main character of your story—your customer should be.** This foundational marketing principle is your North Star. Your brand is not a logo. It's not a color palette or a clever tagline. A brand is the feeling people get when they hear your name and you're not in the room. It's the reputation that struts in before you do and lingers long after you've gone.

I've spent my career building media properties, advising politicians, founders and CEOs, influencers, creatives, and entrepreneurs on how to turn their image, product, or service into names people trust with their money, their attention, and their loyalty. And along the way, I noticed something that made me furious — then made me get to work. The women doing the most original, most necessary work were too often the quietest about it. They built brilliant things and then *whispered* about them. They undercharged — or didn't charge at all. They apologized for taking up space. They let louder, lesser competitors take their money off the table while they looked the other way. Help me make that make sense...but who am I to talk? That was once me, but no more. I'm full-throated in my quest to Brand Like a Boss B!tch, and I want you there with me.

I've been an entrepreneur since I was 13 years old selling holiday greeting cards door-to-door. Do you remember the Hallmark Card Catalogue business? I was also part owner of a film production company in my early 20s and owned a small wedding boutique and event planning business in my 30s. When I studied television and film production in undergrad and grad school, I knew I had discovered my first love. In all cases and at all levels, branding echoed louder and louder in how I conducted business before I even appreciated the importance of brand marketing and using it as an asset when pitching an idea or winning over a proposal. I don't want that for you. I've done the research, lived the mistakes and successes, and laid it out in this take-no-prisoners exposé. Down the rabbit hole we go — follow me on this journey.

This book is a playbook, not a pep talk — though baby, you'll get plenty of fire here too. I wrote it for the entrepreneur bootstrapping her first product, the business owner ready to stop blending in, the influencer tired of chasing algorithms instead of building equity (that can be sooooo tiresome), the non-profit leader who needs hearts *and* wallets to open, and the creative who's been told her art and her ambition can't share the same room. They can. They will. You dictate how you show up in that space, and I'm here to help and cheerlead.

Branding like a boss isn't about being the loudest woman in the room. It's about being the *clearest*. Clarity is what draws in your ideal customer and builds trust. Clarity is what turns a stranger into a customer, a customer into a fan, and a fan into the person who sells for you—directly and indirectly—while you sleep.

Rolled into these pages is a mountain of brand strategies, tips, best practices and basically THE SCOOP from women (only women, please) who are at the top of this Boss B!tch Branding Game. I've sprinkled in a few of my own experiences — some juicy, most not — to give some real-life context to the struggle

and triumph. So, here's the deal. You bring the courage and the consistency. I'll bring the strategy. By the time we're done, you will know exactly who you are, exactly who you serve, and exactly how to make them feel it — across every platform, every post, every pitch, every product.

Pull up a chair, stool, bench, recliner—whatever is most comfortable. Bring your A game and let's build something they can't ignore.

If you want to continue the conversation and be a part of a community of “Boss Branders,” join the #BBCollective! It's a tight group of entrepreneurs, influencers, creatives, movers and shakers who come together to sharpen irons and hold each other accountable in this ecosystem. We meet quarterly and hold social events across the U.S. to network and pat each other on the back. We let the guys join us in the collective so they can learn how it's done. Go to www.bossbrandcollective.com for details and join the fiesta!

— V. Helena

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is a call to action, not a coffee-table book. Mark it up. Dog-ear it. Argue with me in the margins. Use color-coded highlighters to filter the YES! from the I'M GOING TO CHECK YOU BOO! sentiments, and spill something on it. That means you're using it right.

It moves in five parts. **Part One** builds your brand foundation — the identity work everything else stands on. Don't skip it, even if you've been in business for years; I've found this to be where most brands are secretly broken. **Part Two** builds your marketing engine — the systems that take your brand to market and bring customers home. **Part Three** gets specific: five chapters for five kinds of women-led ventures, each with a full sample campaign you can run. **Part Four** is staying power — scaling, protecting, and evolving without losing your soul or vision. **Part Five** sharpens the edge: pricing, selling, your website, community, legal protection, sustainability, and branding in the age of AI.

Read it front to back or read Parts One and Two and then jump to the chapter that fits your world. Either way, *do the work* at the end of each chapter — in Part Three you'll see it as “Make It Yours,” your cue to adapt the sample campaign to your own brand. Reading about branding builds knowledge. Doing the work builds a brand.

From the Booth I will share some anecdotes, bring the message of the chapter home, and provide some parting thoughts to keep you motivated. We're truly in this together. There's no shame in making mistakes. Learn from them and share with others.

One more thing before you start marking pages: the whole journey ahead runs on my five-move framework, the Boss B!tch Method™ — you'll meet it properly in a few pages. Whenever you

feel lost anywhere in this book, find the move you're in and you'll find your footing.

One promise before we start. Everywhere I could have written "your customer," I wrote "she" or "they" on purpose. The default in business books is a man. Not here. Here, the default is you. Every chapter opens with a woman who built something the world couldn't ignore, because we are going to learn this from each other.

MEET THE BOSS B!TCH METHOD

Every brand you admire runs on a method, whether its founder can name it or not. I can name mine. I've used it to tune up political campaigns, build media properties, position executives and creatives, and turn quiet, brilliant women into brands their industries can't ignore. It's the spine of this book, it's what my clients pay for, and starting now, it's yours.

It's called the **BB Method** — short for the **Boss B!tch Method™**, and yes, I named it that on purpose. It answers to the same name in my boardrooms as it does on this page: same method, same name, every room. In these pages, Sis, we just keep it short. Five moves — and they spell exactly what you think they spell: **B!TCH**.

Move One: BRAND. The promise she can count on from you every single time — and the foundation beneath it: purpose, values, story, and the change you're here to create. Chapters 1 and 2.

Move Two: IDENTITY. Who you are while you build it — the experience, personality, perspective, voice, and look nobody can duplicate. Chapters 3 through 5.

Move Three: TERRITORY. Own a space in her mind. Position yourself where only you can stand and know her better than she knows herself. Chapters 6 and 7.

Move Four: CONTENT. Turn the brand into words and work she can follow — messaging, content, platforms, and the list you own. Chapters 8 through 11.

Move Five: HYPE. Earned heat, not empty noise — PR, partnerships, paid, and the numbers that prove the fire is real. Chapters 12 through 14.

And before you side-eye that last one: hype, the Boss B!tch way, is never about being the loudest woman in the room. It's about being so clear, so visible, and so consistently good that the room starts doing the talking for you.

Part Three shows you the method in motion — five women, five playbooks, all five moves at work. Part Four is how you protect the house the method builds. Part Five sharpens every edge. And the Boss B!tch Toolkit at the back of this book is the whole method as a checklist.

Work the moves in order the first time through. After that, come back to whichever one is wobbling — a brand that isn't converting usually has a Content or Hype problem, but a brand that isn't connecting almost always broke at Brand or Identity.

And when you're ready to run the method with me and a room full of women doing the same, that's exactly what the #BBCollective is for. You've got the playbook. The seat is waiting.

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PART ONE: THE FOUNDATION

Who you are before you sell a single thing.

*In order to be irreplaceable, one must
always be different.*

— COCO CHANEL

CHAPTER 1: A BRAND IS A PROMISE YOU KEEP ON REPEAT

Most folks think branding is what you say about yourself. Cute. But branding, baby, is what *they* say about you the second you've left the chat — the receipts your name leaves in a room you already walked out of. It's the gap, or, when you've done the work right, the flawless overlap, between the story you tell and the experience you deliver.

Brand strategist Denise Lee Yohn studied the greats for twenty-five years and landed on a truth I want tattooed on your forehead: great brands aren't great because of a pretty logo. They're great because *everything* — the culture, the customer experience, the way the phone gets answered — keeps the same promise. The logo is the outfit. The promise is the woman. Girl, you might look flawless in that getup, but the woman has to shine through.

So, here's the cleanest definition I've got, and I want you to write it somewhere you'll see it every single day. Post it on your mirror, computer, make it an appointment on your calendar to show up daily, and slip it into your Bible and journal:

A brand is a promise, made clearly and kept consistently, until people start to trust it without thinking.

Break that sentence apart and you're holding the whole game.

A promise — you're telling people exactly what to expect. Faster. Warmer. Bolder. More luxe. More honest. More fun. Pick your lane and own it.

Made clearly — if she can't repeat your promise back to you in one breath, you don't have a brand, honey...you have a blur.

Kept consistently — the promise has to hold up when you're running on three hours of sleep: in your packaging, in your DMs, in your refund policy, in the way whoever answers your phone says hello. If it doesn't, retool and relaunch.

Until people trust it without thinking — that's the prize. That's the moment branding quietly turns into money. Trust is the shortcut buyers take when they don't have time to do the research, and a strong brand earns that shortcut every time. No one has or wants to find the time to do the research. It should roll off their tongue and be completely lodged in their brain—like real estate.

Here are some examples of strong brands across the five playbooks that you will hear from later. Look these ladies up even if you know them. Pay attention to how they move in business, how they brewed their successful brand, and support them, if you can. Pay very close attention to their brand message to see how they move you. They are trailblazers and worth taking notice of.

The Entrepreneur → Glossier (Emily Weiss). Weiss didn't start with a product — she started with a *voice* and a *community*.

The Business → Drybar (Alli Webb). In a sea of salons that do everything, Drybar does exactly one thing: blowouts.

The Influencer → Fenty Beauty (Rihanna). She had the reach; the genius was converting it into an *owned* brand with a point of view she'd never rent out: everyone deserves their shade.

The Non-Profit → Girls Who Code (Reshma Saujani). A cause with a real *brand*: a name you remember, a crisp mission (close the gender gap in tech), and a rallying cry — “teach girls bravery, not perfection.”

The Creative → Taylor Swift. She *is* the brand and the product — a signature (confessional storytelling), a fiercely devoted true-fan base (the Swifties), and a direct relationship she guards like gold.

FIVE PLAYBOOKS, ONE SECRET

the same secret, wearing five outfits



*Startup, business, influence, cause, or craft — the winners are all the same underneath:
unmistakably clear, built on belonging, and owners of what matters most.*

WHY THIS MATTERS MORE FOR YOU

When a customer can't tell you and your competitor apart, she defaults to the one thing left on the table: price. And the woman competing on price alone is in a knife fight she'll eventually lose to somebody with deeper pockets or lower standards. A brand is how you climb out of that fight entirely — how you stop competing on price and start competing on *meaning*. People will pay more, sometimes a *lot* more (I know, I have!), for a brand that means something to them. They're not paying for the product anymore. They're paying for the identity, the belonging, the sense of community, the way it makes them feel.

And trust, that's not manipulation. It's the oldest deal humans have ever made with the things they buy. The trench coat, the lipstick, the membership, the donation, the album — we buy what they say about who we are. Your job is to build a brand worth being associated with, and then be relentlessly, unapologetically clear about what it stands for.

THE THREE LAYERS OF A BRAND

Picture your brand as three circles, one inside the other.

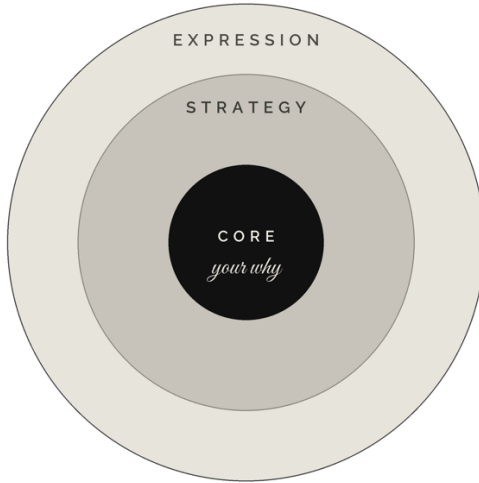
The **core** is your why — the belief that drives the whole thing. This rarely changes.

The **strategy** is the middle layer — your positioning, your audience, your promise, your voice. This evolves slowly and on purpose.

The **expression** is the outer layer — your logo, colors, content, packaging, ads. This can and *should* change often. Most people start at the outer layer and never dig down to the core, which is exactly why their branding ends up pretty but forgettable. We're doing it in the right order: core, then strategy, then expression.

THE THREE LAYERS OF A BRAND

build from the inside out



CORE

your why — the belief that drives it all. Rarely changes.

STRATEGY

positioning, audience, promise, voice. Evolves on purpose.

EXPRESSION

logo, colors, content, packaging, ads. Changes often.

— ♦ —
*Most brands start at the outer layer and never dig to the core —
which is exactly why their branding ends up pretty but forgettable.*

FROM THE BOOTH

Starting at the core is critical. What is “YOUR WHY” and how does it resonate? A promise to your customer is your offering. Your WHY is written all over that offering. When I had my wedding boutique in Annapolis, Maryland, I sold everything but bridal party attire. My “why” was based on the idea that brides had no one-stop shop to purchase everything outside of the dress. With that idea burned in my brand messaging, I stocked my store

with everything from wedding favors to cake toppers to scented soaps to Lenox China to maxi dresses with lux flip flops. Large and small wholesalers and vendors helped me stock uber cute and unique, hard to find items and before long, I had more non-bride customers frequenting the store than brides. Sales were flowing...but my why was blurred.

DO THE WORK

Write down, in one sentence, the promise you make to the people you serve. Not your mission statement. Not your feature list. The *promise*. Can't do it yet? Good — that's what the next five chapters are for. Come back and rewrite it when you've finished Part One.

your move



I got my start by giving myself a start.

— MADAM C.J. WALKER

CHAPTER 2: WHY WOMEN'S BRANDS WIN DIFFERENTLY

Let me be clear about something, because I'm not about to slap a pink ribbon on your business and call it a strategy. Building a brand as a woman is not about decorating your work to look "feminine." It's about reading the room you're standing in, knowing the game, and playing it with your eyes wide open. You're in the boardroom, not the hair salon.

THE OBSTACLES, NAMED PLAINLY

Women founders still receive a sliver of venture funding. We get interrupted more, credited less, and judged on a narrower band of "acceptable." Too soft and you're not taken seriously; too sharp and suddenly you're "difficult." Customers and gatekeepers carry quiet assumptions about who gets to be the authority. None of this is your fault — and all of it is your terrain. And if you're a Black woman, a woman of color, an immigrant, a woman over fifty, a queer woman — you already know the band gets narrower still. A boss doesn't pretend the ground is flat. She studies it and finds the high ground. Know the terrain and how to navigate it.

The high ground, for most women-led brands, is **trust and connection** — the exact things the modern market is starving for. COVID-19 instilled a level of distrust amongst consumers and there was certainly a loss in community connections. It's never too late to turn the corner in building/re-building these very important elements.

THE ADVANTAGES, USED DELIBERATELY

We're living in a moment where people are exhausted by hype, suspicious of corporations, and desperate to buy from brands that feel *real*. That is a market practically built for the strengths women-led brands tend to bring: relationship-building, community, authenticity, an obsession with how the customer actually feels. Madam C.J. Walker built one of the great American fortunes a century ago by doing exactly this — selling not just hair products but dignity, possibility, and a sisterhood of sales agents who saw themselves in her story.

This isn't about being “nicer.” A brand that makes people feel seen, that builds a genuine community, that remembers and responds — that brand has retention numbers a flashier competitor only dreams about. And retention, not acquisition, is where real wealth gets built.

THREE RULES FOR WOMEN BRANDING BOLDLY

Rule one: Authority is a choice, not a permission slip.

Nobody is going to knock on your door and grant you the right to be the expert. You claim it — in your language, your pricing, your boundaries, your refusal to caveat every sentence into oblivion. Remove “maybe,” “sorry,” and “I think” from your brand voice and replace those weak brand words with “absolutely,” “let's make it right,” and “most certainly.” That's the confidence you bring to the brand. It must be uncompromising or go back and retool. You need to be ready for primetime.

Rule two: Warmth and authority are not opposites. The false choice — be likable *or* be respected — has cost women fortunes. The strongest women's brands are both: warm in tone, ironclad in standards, generous in spirit, firm on price. You get to be the friend *and* the boss. Own that.

Rule three: Visibility is the job, not a side effect. You cannot build a brand from behind the curtain. If being seen makes you want to hide, that's not a reason to stay small — it's the exact muscle we're going to build, one rep at a time. If you're having difficulty with visibility, take another look at your offer. Do you believe in it? We're going to take a deeper dive in the next chapter.

FROM THE BOOTH

I was asked once if it is okay to fake it until you make it. Girl, ABSOLUTELY...and this is why. We all have a vision of what it means to “make it” and they are often lofty to the point we see ourselves jumping up and down on a bed full of Benjamins and planning our next extravagant vacation. Girl, calm down, you ain't there yet, but if you stay the course, you will be and chances are you fell upon your CORE (see Chapter 3) based on an experience that led to the development of your WHY—which is a great start! For me, it was the years and years of selling products and services that honed my skill in producing a brand message that stands out from the crowd. Part of that message was to dream beyond my current state and sell the *vision* to the customer—not to deceive, but to help them believe in the product selection or service.

One of my hype statements —

Visit my wedding boutique where I have over 1,000 items necessary to make your wedding experience magical!

Did I know for sure my item selections would make a bride's wedding experience magical? My crystal ball says no, but the message within the message is *you have over 1,000 items to choose from and at least one will fit your fancy*. I never had a bride leave the store not finding what she was looking for.

So Honey, sell the vision within and hype the message. “Making it” is where you’re going, not where you are today. Don’t deceive...just color beyond the lines.

DO THE WORK

List three places where you currently shrink — in your pricing, your bio, your sales conversations, your boundaries. Next to each, write the bolder version. You don’t have to act yet. You just have to *see* it.

your move



Catch Fire on Purpose.

— V. HELENA

*The Boss B!tch Method™ · Five Moves to Build a Brand
That Owns the Room*

CHAPTER 30: CATCH FIRE ON PURPOSE

O kay, Boss B!tch. We made it. You've dug into your brand's core. You've wrestled with your purpose, values, personality, story, voice, visuals and positioning. You've gotten clear about the woman you're serving. You've learned how to turn your promise into words, words into content, content into visibility, and visibility into relationships. You've thought about money, community, protection, sustainability and even AI.

You've done the work.

But here's the thing I want you to understand before you close this book:

Branding isn't a pile of separate strategies.

It is a system. Everything we've talked about in these pages connects. Your purpose influences your positioning. Your positioning shapes your message. Your message drives your content. Your content creates visibility. Your visibility creates recognition. Recognition creates trust. And trust creates opportunity.

That's the ecosystem.

I created **The Boss B!tch Method™** to give you a simple way to remember it. Five moves. Five questions. One brand that people can recognize, remember and trust.

And yes, it spells **B!TCH**.

Because if you're going to Brand Like a Boss B!tch, you might as well have a method with some personality.

B — BRAND:

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BUILDING

Let's start with the obvious question:

What exactly are you building?

Not your logo. Not your Instagram page. Not your website. Not your product.

Your brand.

A brand is the promise you make clearly and keep consistently until people learn to trust it without thinking. That's why your brand has to begin beneath the surface. You need to know your purpose, your promise, your values, your personality, your story, your customer, and your desired reputation.

Think of this as your foundation. If your foundation is shaky, everything you build on top of it will wobble. And please don't tell me your purpose is "to make money." Money is important. Very important. But that's a business objective, not the deeper reason your brand needs to exist.

Ask yourself:

What change do I want to create?