

Brand Your Business

Branding your business, be it the business name or the product or service you provide, is an excellent way to position yourself in the marketplace. Brands are found everywhere and often give the connotation of a higher level of quality. Is your business and product/service line branded strongly? If not, you may want to consider it. Brand recognition is based upon perception.

Here's how you can build and improve it:

- 1. Rejection.** If your brand is associated with something negative, often consumers will avoid your product or service. Poor customer service is probably the number one factor in brand rejection. Do your customers say that about your business? Create an identity that is filled with great benefits to your customer and put it on everything that your prospects may see. Then, follow through at every level to prove the logo/slogan to be totally correct. Every single contact becomes a positive marketing opportunity.
- 2. No recognition.** Your customers don't recognize your brand because it doesn't stand out from your competitors'. Strongly stating your product's or service's benefits is important. Always use your "brand" whenever you refer to your product/service. When a new product or service is offered, consider creating a brand for it and then tying it into your overall brand. What makes you different? Is it value, product, service, facility, etc.? Decide on this and promote it constantly.
- 3. Recognition.** If you have no recognition at all, this is what you want to aim for. Recognition of your brand will lean people toward your product or service when given the choice. However, remember that your competitors are also involved on brand recognition, meaning that their brand could be as recognizable as yours. It's important to differentiate yourself and continue a policy of "added value" in order to get to the next step.
- 4. Preference.** Where customers, given a choice, will choose yours over the competition. Often, this is the result of their sense that your product or service is superior (in whatever way you've chosen to emphasize) to your competition's. Even so, it's still vitally important that when you are compared, you are continually offering a "value-added" perception to your customer.
- 5. Loyalty.** Lastly, this is the point that customers will choose your brand over and over, even if they occasionally experience a problem (such as poor service) or if another competitive product/service enters the marketplace. To get to the loyalty stage, you'll need to provide a product/service that is unique enough, has lots of added value, and also offers an exceptional level of "no-problem" and "expected" day to day service. That level of service will also efficiently address and solve any customer problems that may arise. Adhering to this level of service will ensure that they will think long and hard before even considering a switch.

If you're not branding, make it a point to start right away. It's not just products that can be branded. If you have a collection of services, consider bundling them and branding them as a unit.



Logo imprinted items are a great way to keep your brand identity in front of current customers or prospects. These promotional items can be used in a variety of effective ways including: sponsored events, in-house give aways, employee recognition, advertising to potential customers, and more.

What's Your Marketing Strategy?

A marketing strategy is the very basis of your overall marketing plan.

Your marketing strategy needs have goals that are achievable as well as realistic. Once a strategy is clearly defined, the marketing plan can be developed. Think of your marketing strategy as a guide that indicates the right direction, and keeps your program on course, especially when obstacles occur. A well thought out marketing strategy will enable you to avoid wrong decisions, while making the correct ones. A good marketing strategy helps you to determine long-term and short-term goals, which affects how you run your business.

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Marketing Is The Overall System...

But Advertising Is An Integral Component.

Don't Make These Common Advertising Mistakes:

"I Don't Think Advertising Is That Important": Many businesses do not correlate the vital relationship between effective advertising and increased sales, which leads to maximizing profit. A lot of time and money are spent on details that really don't support business growth. This can prove to be an expensive mistake. The fact remains that any business, without a proper advertising program, is bound to struggle by constantly wondering why the world isn't pounding a path to their door. Understanding how to properly conduct advertising is a specialized discipline and a business owner may be unable to handle the on-going processes that are involved. When you can't "do-it-yourself", it's best to hire someone who can. Funny thing...when you are running a business, advertising always ends up on the back burner in favor of more "important" things. Don't let this happen!

"Relatives and Friends Have My Best Interest At Heart": When business owners handle their own advertising, they may rely on advice from their spouse, friends and relatives. Usually, although good intentioned, they're not professionals. Doing this is similar to taking a grocery store clerk's advice on engineering a structural beam for a new addition to your home. They may know, but do you really want to take the chance?

"Anyone Can Do Creative Advertising": When advertising is entrusted to a printer, newspaper, cable company or other "advertising" vendor, they often do not devote time for in-depth analysis. There's no research, except their own demographics, and certainly none on the nature of your business, your customers or your product/service. This usually results in the creation of an advertisement that just doesn't address your potential customer properly. You've gone to the effort of creating a marketing plan, so unsubstantiated claims about your product/service being the "best" or

Strategy...

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Goals To Consider When Developing a Marketing Strategy

These goals need to encompass gathering and analyzing information to formulate your overall marketing plan. Appropriate market research is useful in collecting and co-ordinating much of this information:

- Who are our competitors in our defined market?
- What are our product's/service's unique attributes?
- What are the characteristics of our current customers?
- How are we going to contact and follow up with prospects?
- How are we going to price our products/services?
- What is going to be our marketing investment?
- How are we going to implement continuing research?
- How are we going to produce our marketing tools and systems?

Types of Marketing Strategies

Marketing strategies depend on the current situation in the marketplace. Specific requirements require different strategies. For example, if you're looking to be the leader in a given market, you'll need a marketing dominance strategy. Determining your current position as leader, challenger, follower or niche will determine your overall approach.

Innovation strategy is appropriate when you're offering new products or services and is dependent upon how unique this product or service might be in a given market. Innovation strategy is characterized by pioneers, close behind or late.

Confrontational strategy uses aggressive tactics or defensive moves directed at your competitors. This strategy would include direct confrontational approaches, direct defensive approaches, "guerrilla" marketing aimed at a specific competitor.

Of course, you can also develop a strategy that focuses on the growth and development of your business utilizing expansion, diversification or intensification.

A well thought out marketing strategy will result in an increase in profits and cut down losses. But please remember, marketing strategies are not forever. On-going awareness of the market, and adjustment of your strategy is what will help your business to remain successful.

the like, really don't cut it. Usually, prospects tend to ignore this type of unsubstantiated information anyway. In every case, your advertisement needs to emphasize at least one thing that makes your product different and how it will benefit the buyer. You, as the business owner, are the only one who can provide this information. It's your ultimate responsibility to ensure that any advertisement is designed to include real and accurate information while spotlighting a timeframe for the prospect to act. Time limits really do work and will increase sales.

"Low Pricing Is Key": Projecting your business as the low priced option is usually not a good idea. Offering a cheap price usually makes an advertisement appear as if the price is the only reason to choose your product/service. Low prices, especially those substantially lower than your competition, will generally come back to haunt you. Be competitive... but don't be cheap.

"Sponsorship of Events Just Isn't Worth It": Word of mouth is still the best form

of advertising. What better way to accomplish this than by sponsoring or participating in special events and taking advantage of the event's advertising program to enhance yours. A lot business owners totally disregard this powerful source of advertising altogether. An event will automatically lend confidence to the sponsors or participants.

The same is true of an article written by a newspaper, even though it was provided by you through a PR release. It's usually true that all the details of your product or service won't be covered in a news release, but, as "news" it offers your business a wide amount of coverage that can reach a lot of potential customers.

As an integral part of your marketing program, advertising allows you to address a large audience of potential customers. A poor mix, as well as an uninformed creative approach will result in wasted effort and resources. If we can avoid advertising mistakes, waste can be substantially reduced.