

Business

Brand Building Across Media Categories

By SHIRA LINDEN

You decide a particular book will be the perfect gift for Uncle Joe, and you're surfing the web for a bookseller:

Will you visit Amazon.com?
Barnesandnoble.com?
Ablebooks.com?
Powells.com?

Addall.com? Or one of the thousands of other choices? Chances are, you won't want to buy from a site you've never heard of, so you zero in on Amazon or Barnes & Noble. Such is the power of branding. Branded products and services stand out from the plethora of choices inundating today's consumers. Branding gives your prospects a "shortcut" that helps them decide to select you. Want to become a recognizable name within your target market (the folks that need what you're good at)? Building a strong brand can accelerate that process many times over.

What is a brand? Philip Kotler, considered the world's preeminent marketing thinker and author of over 25 books says, "A brand is essentially a seller's promise to consistently deliver a specific set of features, benefits and services to the buyer."

If you're an entrepreneur, branding yourself is key. Picture Donald Trump, his signature hairdo and forthright style. His brand is recognizable around the world and permeates his holdings, from buildings to casinos to his TV show.

Your personal brand includes how you look, what you say, how you say it – the image, emotion and thoughts you invoke in others. Boost your brand by conveying a consistent, positive message at all touch points. A touch point is every customer/prospect interface, whether it's via phone, networking, e-mail, your website, speaking, writing articles, giving teleclasses / webinars or in-person presentations. Etch your brand message into the minds of your audience through frequent communication with your target market.



Create your own Unique Brand

Think about what you stand for and how you want others to perceive you. Identify your best personality characteristics and consider these marketable assets. Then, let your positive traits shine through. Be yourself! If you're unsure or need help defining your brand, ask customers and friends for feedback.

Write your mission statement, describing your talents, assets and values.

Define what's distinctive and memorable about your brand. What will stick in someone's mind after they've met you?

Distinguish yourself through words and actions, infusing your personality into your brand. Then, promote your brand at every opportunity, making sure you communicate what makes you tick. Build brand recognition through repeated exposure, and at each touch point, delivering a consistent message across media channels.

Brand Building 101

The secret of branding success is, first of all, to develop a unique brand – (do one thing and do it really well) – and then boldly communicate your brand message across all media channels. Begin by drafting a vision statement about your goals and the destination you're striving to reach. Articulate your value proposition – your unique offering, which includes a compelling point of difference (your unique selling proposition) that make you stand out from every other company.

Focus on your target audience and define your brand promise. Convey the specific image, feeling and thought you want your target audience to have about you. Ask your customers what are the top reasons that they buy from you rather than your competitors. Then, select the specific strategies you will use to reach your audience.

Pound that message home in every ad, news release, communication with employees, sales call and media interview.

Consistency is the Key to Success

With consistent repetition of a persuasive selling message, customers will think of you and buy from you when they are faced with a buying decision and must choose between you and your competitors.

Consistency applies to look, color, words, tone, message, offer – every aspect of your message. If your message is inconsistent, your audience will not know what to think, and won't take the time to figure it out, let alone remember it.

Whatever your chosen media, you must be consistent in hammering your brand message. Also, ensure that your media channels are working together, consistently exposing your brand to consumers. For example, make the same offer on the web and in your catalog. If this seems like a lot of work, it is. But the payoff will be worth it.

Five Reasons Brand Building Benefits

1. Attract repeat sales- loyal customers often return to strong brands without prompting.
2. Charge a premium. People will pay more for brands they know and trust.

3. Gain an incontrovertible business edge. Strong brands occupy a market niche that staves off competition.

4. Simplify your customer's decision and ensure you come to mind first.

5. Build confidence and trust before the sale by promoting your message over time.

Naming – the Foundation of Branding

If your company is in the startup phase, take the naming process very seriously. Be clear that a name has a major impact on your company's "memorability factor." Is it easy to remember? Does it sum up what you do? Is it unique? The process requires more than just going to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to search available names. It demands exploration, creativity, and focus. After all, you're going to make an investment in this name for the next 10 years or more.

Come up with about five available names that you like, and poll your target customers as to their preferences. Ask your colleagues and peers as well. Then register that name and proceed with logo design / tag line development.

6 Components of a Good Brand

How do you know when you're on track with your company name and branding? Here are six benchmarks:

1. Targeted-appropriate to your market and product
2. Clear-instantly communicates your message
3. Meaningful-says what's great about your company that you can deliver on
4. Reinforces your identity-conveys your core image
5. Recognizable-stands out in the marketplace, which is aided by repetition
6. Actionable-must motivate customers to buy

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And consultant. Interested in knowing more?

Visit www.promowriting.com and see the Tip Sheet,

"13 Tactics to Boost your Brand," under the Tips section. Contact 203.371.0654,

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