

Marketing Factsheet: Creating a brand



Doing business gets easier when you have a recognisable brand! Think about BP or Vodafone, for example. If you mention the names, millions of people throughout the world have an immediate perception and expectation of what that company stands for. There's an emotional connection between the customer and the company name.

With a strong brand, you don't have to sell nearly as long or as hard. Customers know what you stand for before the pitch or proposal. Here's how to give your business the kind of brand identity that will help drive sales. Here, too, are tips for customising your own brand personality 'tool kit' that will keep your brand alive and growing.

Define your brand personality

A brand is the promise you make to your customer combined with the customer's judgment about how well you deliver on that promise. A successful brand becomes an emotional bond that builds customer loyalty. A brand includes your logo, colour scheme, taglines, slogan, design elements and more.

Think of branding as the personality of your enterprise. Define that, and the logo and other marketing messages will follow. To build your brand, begin by thinking through exactly what it is you sell and why customers choose your product or service.

Identify the promise you are making to your customers. For instance, you may manufacture vacuum cleaners, but what you're really selling is a better way to clean the house. This is what the customer wants: a solution to their problem.

You must also define what makes your product more desirable to the customers you're targeting than that of your competition. Remember your USP and build on this. Remember those benefits to customers that you identified; these are what you are selling, not features.

Build brand recognition

You want your business's personality to be easily identifiable at every customer touch point, from word of mouth to final sale.

Make sure that every piece of packaging, presentation, communication and marketing speaks with a brand-consistent look and voice.

The same branding should appear on your entire range of advertising and promotional options, not just on stationery or sales brochures. This includes press releases, e-mail signatures, trade show displays and booths, store or office sign age, banners and highway billboards, print ads, posters and marketing for sponsored or charity events -in other words, everything.



Police your brand

Educate everyone else that works for you about your brand and its tools as well. Otherwise you'll have staff and subcontractors creating their own versions and confusion. Once you assemble the brand tool kit, everyone can then access it and draw upon whatever is needed.

Even so, over time, logos tend to shape and shift. Someone adds a shoreline to the water's edge that floats your sailboat logo. Someone else re-draws the boat so the prow faces into the sun. Pretty soon, your little sailboat is sinking.

To prevent this, appoint yourself (or somebody else) to 'police' the brand toolkit, especially if you work with outside vendors. Keep track of who accesses the tool kit and how it is used and for what marketing channels. You want to track all branding appearances and changes.

Brand power

Many business owners pooh-pooh branding because they're busy chasing sales, impressing investors or recruiting talent. 'Who has time for such stuff?' they say. Yet success comes from differentiating your offerings in the marketplace and rigorously serving your best customers.

If you take the time to brand -that is, figure out how to articulate who you are, what you sell, and which customers to target -all your marketing efforts become more focused.

Finally, honour what your brand symbolises. The greatest tag or strap line in the world won't get customers to come back if you don't fulfill your marketing promises.