

# **BUILDING BRAND RECOGNITION: Big Business Tactics that Your Small Business can Afford to Employ**

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***A well-thought-out branding strategy can create a reputable and memorable brand without big budget advertising.***

## **BUILDING BRAND RECOGNITION:**

### **Big Business Tactics that Your Small Business can Afford to Employ**

In a competitive marketplace, a strong brand can make it easier for over-stimulated consumers to make buying decisions. Many buyers find relying on a name easier than trying to compare features and quality.

#### **How can a small business or start-up entrepreneur establish a powerful brand?**

Coca Cola™, McDonalds™, Kentucky Fried Chicken™, Campbells™, Heinz™... what do they all have in common?

Brand recognition.

Do you know how they achieved recognition? Big advertising budgets, right?

Prolific advertising helps to make a brand memorable. But certain steps are essential before well before commencing an advertising campaign. Without them, an advertising campaign might have negative, rather than positive, results!

In fact, a well-thought-out branding strategy can create a reputable and memorable brand without big budget advertising.

Your brand maintenance strategy—not your advertising budget—is likely to be your most powerful weapon for winning the branding war!

### **What is a Brand?**

Some entrepreneurs labor for hours over naming ideas, logo designs, color schemes, and tag lines. All are important contributors to the brand building process. They are not your brand.

The term “brand” refers to the image, or impression, created in the mind of a member of the public—a typical customer or prospective customer—when they see or hear anything associated with your business or product.

Think of McDonalds™. You think of hamburgers, right? You think of a particular style of hamburger; a particular style of service; a particular style of packaging and presentation. See a McDonalds sign or advertisement, and you can ‘taste’ the burger. You can see the packaging. You can feel the atmosphere.

We typically associate Coca Cola™ with a taste, bubbles and fizz. There is a mood or feeling that you associate with the name.

These companies have so successfully established their brand that it can survive the occasional business mistake or a bad customer experience. It would distress customers to see the brand applied to a misfit product! The brand belongs, not to the company or the product, but to the experience the customer enjoys when they see or hear the name.

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**Identify your target customer—precisely. Accurately define that unfilled need that you believe you can satisfy.**

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To brand successfully, you must begin by defining that customer experience.

Describe, in detail, the exact picture, taste, or feel your customer should experience when they hear your business or product name.

The management of Kleenex™ wants customers to feel softness.

The management of Fedex™ wants people to see their package being delivered to its destination the very next day.

The management of Kentucky Fried Chicken™ wants you to remember a taste so good you feel compelled to lick the last lingering remnants from your fingers!

Can you think of other well-known companies that have successfully associated an image, taste or feeling with their brand?

These successful companies didn't concentrate first on their offering. They focused, first, on what they perceived their target customer most wanted.

Fedex™ understood that customers wanted to be certain their package would reach its destination quickly.

Kleenex™ understood that noses get sore and red when one has a cold, and a touch of softness is welcome.

Colonel Sanders simply focused on the customer's desire for a great taste.

Step one in branding, then, is to identify your target customer—precisely.

Accurately define that unfilled need that you believe you can satisfy.

Describe, in as few words as possible, the exact taste, scent, or feeling you would like your customer to experience when he/she hears your name. Your description should be no more than a dozen words. If you can't convey your message efficiently in twelve words, you are not yet clear about what your customer wants from you!

Congratulations! You've conceived your tag line. That's where branding begins!

Now you can proceed to create a business or product name, a color scheme, and a logo that complements that tag line. Focus on strengthening the image you want to create in your customer's mind. Complement your tag line.

Your name and logo might expand the image created by your tagline, or clarify and re-enforce it.

### **Choosing Fonts, Colors and Shapes**

Fonts, colors and shapes have meaning. They have personality.

Fonts can be **formal**, **casual**, *whimsical*, or *elegant*.

Some are lightweight. Others are **heavy** and forceful.

***Choose colors, shapes and fonts for your logo carefully. They are a vital part of your identity, and should complement and re-enforce your key message.***

Fonts can be **FANCY**, **fat**, slim, or **TALL**.

There are hundreds of fonts to choose from, and each conveys its own special message. It's important to ensure the message spoken by the font you choose complements and enhances the image you seek to create.

Colors can be associated with energy and power (red); joy, happiness or intellect (yellow); freshness and fertility (green); or faith, truth, wisdom and trust (blue).

A circle in your logo denotes connection, continuity, or perfection. It can also be associated with love, and with femininity.

A square or rectangle indicates order and logic.

A triangle suggests energy, power, and balance. It can be associated with masculine strength, and sometimes aggression. It is commonly used in law and religion.

Even something as simple as a line can denote strength and weight; limits or restrictions; or ease, softness, and openness, depending on the weight, style, color, proportional length, and location in a design or on a page.

Choose colors, shapes and fonts for your logo carefully. They are a vital part of your identity, and should complement and re-enforce your key message.

### **Building the Message**

You have defined your identity.

Your task now is to expand your message. Where will your message appear? On signs and billboards? In print ads? In television ads? On web sites? On your business stationery and reports?

List all the places.

Typically, the space available and the amount of detail required in your message will vary according to where and how your message is used.

You need a collection of messages, in varying detail, tailored to attract attention quickly; provide moderate detail; or provide in-depth information and a strong buying invitation.

Similarly, a collection of images may be required in varying styles and sizes. The most obvious requirement is for a black and white and a color version of your logo. It's amazing how many business owners forget that color printing isn't always an option! Check that your business stationery looks good when printed in grey-scale.

### **Consistency is the Key**

We remember popular tag lines for two reasons: they are smart and relevant; and they are often repeated.

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Successful companies do change their key message from time to time. They don't change them regularly. Any variations are carefully executed to maintain brand consistency.

Once you have designed an image, the key to building a strong brand is repeat, repeat, repeat!

Repeat your colors. Use them in décor, signs, posters, advertisement, brochures, on stationery...absolutely everywhere! Use the exact same colors, in the exact same proportions and balance. Repeat your logo. Repeat your fonts. Repeat your shapes. Repeat your line styles. Change nothing...no matter how boring you find it! Repeat it over and over and over again!

Repeat your message. Repeat your message. Repeat your message.

### **Maintaining the Brand**

It might surprise you to know that larger companies employ a brand manager. The brand manager's job is to protect the business image. He inspects every advertisement, every sign, and every communication. His job is to ensure absolute consistency. With a large staff and, often, multiple physical outlets, it's essential to apply some controls to ensure consistency is maintained.

Smaller businesses generally outsource tasks like designing advertisements, creating signs, and developing brochures. With multiple freelance suppliers providing a range of services, it's easy to see how branding consistency can become a challenge. Few small businesses can afford the luxury of a brand manager on staff!

Or can they?

With a small investment of time and effort, it is feasible for even the smallest business to implement a brand management program that guarantees the consistency necessary to build a strong brand. With the right strategy in place, the smallest start-up can commence a brand-building program to rival those of big name corporations and franchises.

**The secret is to develop a comprehensive messaging guide.**

### **Your Messaging Guide**

Your messaging guide is your branding bible. It should be accessible to every member of your organization, and to every outsourced service provider, regardless of the type of services provided.

Your message should be very clear:

*"This guide defines who we are! These are our branding guidelines. They tell you how we want to be perceived by our customers, and the world. Everything you do in and for our business must conform strictly to these guidelines. No variations—no matter how small—are permitted."*

Your Messaging Guide begins with an introduction explaining, briefly and in layman's terms, the perception you wish to create in the minds of your customers and the public. It tells others exactly how you wish to be seen and remembered.

Next, explain your choice of business or product name. What does it mean? Why did you choose it?

List the fonts used to create your letterhead, logo, labels, and signs. Take care to display samples, and to specify relative font sizes. Explain your choices. What specific features led you to select these fonts?

Colors should be defined using RGB codes. Where possible, include the codes for web equivalents. Explain your selection. What does each color signify and how does its meaning relate to your business?

Proudly show your logo, and specify the permitted sizes, proportional to other elements in a design and/or to popular page or advertisement block sizes. Explain your choice of logo. What do each of its elements signify?

Now your tag line. How and why did you select that message? What impression are you aiming to create?

What is your "unique selling proposition?" What do you offer that sets you apart from your competitors?

Next comes the task of describing your product or service. Describe it in twenty-five words. Expand the definition to fifty words. Expand again to one hundred words. Finally, write a two-hundred-and-fifty word description.

**Note:**

Each description must repeat, and stress, the key message conveyed by your tag line.

Each description must spell out your unique selling proposition.

Each description must repeat and build on the last.

Your next task is to document, preferably in list or table format, all the features of your product. If feasible, prepare a comparison table, showing the features of competing products by comparison with yours.

Now it's time to objectively analyze the benefits you offer. Think from your customer's perspective now—not yours!

It may take some time to collect testimonials and references, but put a program in place right now to ask customers for feedback. When feedback is positive, ask permission to quote them. Collect testimonials and quotable quotes, and organize them in logical categories. If possible, create a database that allows you to search them by length, keywords, author, and other relevant sorting criteria.

Your Messaging Guide should contain a library of images and photographs for use in advertising.

Finally, your Messaging Guide should contain communication guidelines. How do you answer the telephone in your business? What specific rules govern email communications? What font and paragraph styles do you use to type letters and reports? How are report pages formatted?

Upload sample documents, signs, and advertisements.

Provide guidelines for timing responses to enquiries or requests for service.

Document your complaint handling procedures.

In today's world, a web-based Messaging Guide has major advantages. You can upload font, graphic and logo files for download when needed. You can make the guide readily accessible to all your service providers (via a global password, or individual user names and passwords if security is important.)

Using modern technology, a web-based guide can be designed for easy updating. It need never be out of date.

Once created, your Messaging Guide should be used to govern everything you do. Every message must conform. Every impression must re-enforce the image you seek to create.

**Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.**

### **The Final Step**

Just one more step is required to guarantee a strong brand. Though stated last, it is the most important element in your branding strategy.

**The quality of product or service must consistently match the image you have created. You must deliver on your promises!**

It's a simple recipe! Develop a quality product or service that satisfies a genuine want. Define the benefit you offer clearly. Create a clear association between your product and your brand.

Use consistent repetition to create a memorable brand, and sales will follow.

**In today's competitive world, customers frequently find it easier to buy a brand name product than to compare feature and benefit claims.**

**Take time to develop a Messaging Guide, and use it religiously, and you can build your brand to be their first choice.**

**Ensure branding consistency and communication efficiency with a professionally created Messaging Framework for your business.**

**From helping define your brand and writing product descriptions, biographies, mission statements, and business overviews...through to building a complete, professional Messaging Guide—web-based and/or printed—Rainbow Writer can deliver persuasive copy that builds a strong, memorable, positive image.**

**The right words... in the right order...impressively presented!**

**Rainbowriter offers a comprehensive range of business writing and page design services. Please call or email to discuss your business communication needs.**

**Nudge the world a little....**