



WHITE PAPER

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Thinking Through Your Brand

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Developing a strategy for your business' brand is as important as the actual implementation of the brand. A brand is more than just a logo and a catch phrase. Your brand should use images, phrases, and branding tools to effectively reach customers and prospects and convey your company's key messages. These four steps will help you map out a branding strategy:

Step One: Consider the Intangibles

Anything can be branded. Remember that you're branding a concept, not just a company or a product. Intangibles, such as the special way you handle customer service, should be a part of your brand.

If you run a financial consulting service you'll want to brand your intelligence and mastery of finances.

Step Two: Make the Brand Match the Business

Know your company. Make sure your brand identity is parallel to your company identity. A clear relationship should be established for your customers. The connection between a company and its branding should be immediate.

A refrigerator repair company might start sending their favorite customers magnets with their company brand. Branding golf balls or hockey pucks would only confuse people.

Step Three: Speak to Your Target Audience

Make sure your brand speaks to your different audiences. Great branding reaches multiple customer audience segments. Don't leave out potential customers by branding your product or service to one or two customer groups. Obviously your brand won't appeal to everyone but it should reach different types of customers.

If you own a dress shop that usually attracts a middle-aged clientele, don't brand your identity to that population only. Try to appeal to other shoppers as well to encourage them to visit your store. Try placing an advertisement for your store in several different papers that have different readers.

Step Four: Take the Long View

Brand for the long term. Don't be short-sighted about your company's branding! Great branding lasts over a long period of time and its messages don't fade after only a few months. Branding should transcend fads in the marketplace.

If your competitors are trying to position their brand as cool or hip to meet market demands, let them. Try to keep your brand consistent so that it out lives market trends.

Is Co-Branding for You?

One of the most effective ways for businesses to generate brand awareness is through co-branding initiatives. Co-branding enables businesses to reach out to untapped customer segments while maintaining their brand image. Here's an example of how co-branding works.

You're the owner of a local children's bookshop. A software company wants to attach your brand to a new children's game they are developing. They're trying to leverage the qualities associated with your brand--valuable educational books at competitive prices. They don't mind that you've never attempted to branch out into the software markets before. What's important to them is your brand's reputation.

Before you agree to co-brand with a company, ask yourself these questions:

What purpose will this co-branding effort serve?

Make sure you map out your branding intentions. Determine why you should participate in this particular co-branding initiative and what outcome you would like to see.

Is this co-branding initiative for publicity purposes only?

Positive publicity adds value to your company branding. Don't forget that bad publicity will reflect poorly on your branding concept.

How will my customers perceive this co-branding effort?

Attaching your brand to a reputable business is great for your company's image. But be careful not to associate yourself with a brand that is not highly regarded in its industry--or a brand that has nothing in common with the target audience you want to reach.