

Small Business Marketing: Branding is Serious Business

Branding is serious business, it takes a lot of initial thought. A company's brand simply cannot support itself on attractive logo images and font usage alone. The biggest mistake businesses make is focusing on the visual aspect of brand identity without first establishing the brand framework, which contains: the company's position, unique selling proposition (USP) and marketing message.

Brand is defined as a "*name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers*". While the brand image must be both powerful and visually distinctive within the mind of the consumer, small businesses must first determine the most important component of the brand definition: how to "*differentiate [the company's image] from those of other sellers*".

Your company's position and unique selling proposition are the frameworks that must be defined first. Once you have established your position and unique selling proposition (USP), move onto developing your tag line (if applicable) and key marketing messages. Both your tag line and marketing messages are extensions of your position and USP content. The marketing message must articulate the value your company will provide to the customer. Your marketing message must confirm your credibility, connect to your target market, motivate the buyer and set the stage for brand loyalty and evangelism. Once you have completed your content foundation, you are then able to develop the aesthetics of your brand.

When establishing all of the components of your brand, make sure your marketing messages are focused and consistent across all of your marketing communications. For the graphical elements of your brand, you will want to develop a corporate style guide detailing the use of your logo, fonts, slogan and corporate colors. Corporate style guides are imperative when you partner or start co-marketing with other vendors; but they also help you maintain consistency within your own company. Surprisingly, most brand alterations occur in-house; your customer service representatives may use email wallpaper or signatures that not only deviate from the company's font usage specifications but inadvertently showcase unprofessionalism. Watch out for employees who switch out corporate colors on communication pieces because of subjective color likes or dislikes.

Branding allows you to create a visual picture of your company within the customer's mind. Be sure to strategically think through the visuals and marketing content. Similar to the ongoing strategy associated with positioning, your brand images and content must be clearly defined throughout all corporate communication.

About Sprite Marketing

Sprite Marketing is a full-service, affordable, marketing consulting and implementation firm based in beautiful Portland, Oregon. We specialize in both small and medium size businesses. With many years of experience in advertising, marketing and business development, we don't sell marketing fluff. Rather, we offer solid strategies and solutions for both the short and long-term. Our role within your business is up to you; you may choose to use our services on retainer or for specific marketing initiatives. Contact Sprite

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