

Online and Off line Branding

As a graphic designer, the look and feel of your business' creative and online material plays an integral role in the development of your brand. Attractive designs, consistent looks, catchy copy and other design elements can all enhance your image and identity, especially in today's world where websites are a major vehicle to reaching out to your customer base. Many businesses put a lot of time and attention to building a strong website, but in my eyes, that is only half the battle. When developing your marketing plans, I would recommend placing just as much emphasis on offline marketing as online marketing. After spending so much care and time into creating your identity online, you want to make sure are getting the traffic you deserve.

After creating and designing numerous brochures and marketing materials, I have a few offline marketing hints and tips:

- **Always include your website address on all your published materials.** From business cards and letterhead to press releases and brochures, your website address should always be listed to drive traffic.
- **Announce changes or new features on your website in a newsletter or publication.** Give your customers a reason to visit and let them know what can be found online.
- **Be out and about in your customer circles and industry arenas.** Give presentations and talks and let people know they can find out more information on your website. Don't underestimate the word-of-mouth technique.
- **Your staff should be educated on all elements of your website.** From answering phones to talking to customers, every employee should know your website address and know exactly what could be found online.

Now that you are driving traffic to your site, there are also some key online marketing ideas that will complement your offline efforts.

- **Update your website at least once a month.** In such a fluid environment, it is important to keep things fresh and new. Who wants to return to a site that never changes?
- **On the home page, have spot for announcements and events.** Your customers can easily find what's new and will want to check back often to find out the latest information.
- **Create a subscription email newsletter.** This is a very track-able marketing tool that will help you gauge how well you are connecting with your customers.
- **Include copy in your website that will help drive traffic to your website.** Key search words or contact information should be written somewhere on your site. This will help your search engine optimization, so when someone types in your company product, your website appears on the results page.

These are just some helpful hints to remember as you either build or redesign your brand. Just know that both offline and online marketing is a never-ending process. The best way for both to succeed is to have an equal balance between the two.