

Your Brand – More Than A Logo, It's A Way of Life

Starbucks, Apple, Nike. When you hear these names an instant feeling, image and product comes to mind. These companies have excelled in building a brand that customers trust and rely on. People know what kind of service, product and quality to expect, and the companies have built a loyal customer base that keeps their business growing.

Now, for most of us in the small business world, taking over the coffee industry or redefining the athletic shoe market is not what we aim to do. But being able to build that type of recognition and product value with our customers is the common goal. Branding is something every business – whether small, large, corporate or non-profit – does in one manner or another. The key to creating a successful brand is knowing how to manage your brand. Here are some important branding factors to remember:

- **A brand is more than a logo.** It is more than creating an image and placing it on all your business materials. Branding is establishing a relationship with your client or customer so when they see that logo, they know what you stand for. They have a sense of attachment to your brand and most importantly have trust in you and your product.
- **Have a purple cow.** There is a marketing book that explains how every business should have a purple cow – meaning what is it that makes you unique and stand out from the rest of the herd. Develop your unique quality into a message that composes the meaning behind your brand. Position yourself in the market place and find your niche. When customers see your logo, they immediately have a connection to your brand.
- **Presentation, presentation.** For small businesses, branding lies in every aspect of your company. Your message is not only carried out through traditional forms of advertisement but through every point of contact with your customer. The way a staff member answers the telephone is one way, product packaging, one-on-one conversations, promotions, services, etc. Every part and person of the company embodies that brand and plays a role in how your brand is going to be perceived by the customer.
- **Consistency.** This is very important when building trust with your customer. From the website and letterhead to your mailers and brochures, the look and feel of your product should be consistent to help build that bond. A clear, concise and consistent look will lead to a more memorable return.
- **Analysis.** It is important to understand that as the business owner, you are setting the foundation and guidelines for your brand. Now, how the customer reacts and interprets your brand is left entirely up to them. This is why building a brand is an ever-changing process, where you have the power to determine the direction. From the changing market-place to the evolving minds of the customers, you can assess how well you are connecting with your client base and chose the paths that best gets you to your destination.

This is just scraping the tip of the branding iceberg. These are some basic points to best understand how to manage your brand and come out on top. You want your audience to feel as passionate about your product as you do. Remember these points and your brand can very well become the next swoosh.