

Your Business BRAND...and YOU

~ A Workshop



What is your Brand?

What does your brand stand for? You might have a vision of who and what your company is about. It's that vision that helps establish relationships with customers, win over prospects and get your company noticed in this increasingly chaotic and fragmented world.

Whether you are a start-up business, have been established for many years, or find yourself as the leader in the corporate culture, it is time to sit down and analyze your brand. But where do you start?

Don't think that just because you're not NIKE or COKE that you don't need to have a definable brand. Branding, creating a distinctive corporate and business culture identity for your business is critical to your success. You are the brand! As the entrepreneur or leader, you are your company. Take a look at the graphic on the right. These are all of the elements of branding. All of these must line up to complement one another, following the same vision, and must be consistent. The top box is your external brand messages, and the bottom box is your internal system/process that, once again, must be consistent with the top box. So where do you start? Your first step is to define your customer(s) and what you have to offer.

Who is your ideal customer?

This is where you clearly define your target market. In order to perfect the image and message of your brand, you must do the research to determine your target audience and how you want to be seen by that audience. If you are business-to-business, learn as much as you can about your target markets and their industries. If you are business-to-consumer, market to the ages, define the Matures, Baby Boomers and Generation X, and make your brand vision marketing specific to each. They all think and act differently, so ensure that you clearly understand how they think and function, and tailor your brand message correctly to each target audience. If they are all your audience, then your message needs to be different for each. Then, prioritize each market, so that the major focus is on the largest market. As you grow, you can spend more time and finances on each market segment.

What do you offer your customers?

Now you examine exactly what services and products you offer. Match up what you offer with each target market, marrying your solution to the pain or problem in each market. Be as detail as you can with this activity, as it is of paramount importance.

THE ELEMENTS OF BRANDING



What are your business's vision and values?

Now take a look at your business vision and values. What is your mission? What are your goals? Make sure that each is consistent with your values. Define and write your positioning statement. If there are several market segments that you will be serving, create a statement for each.

Brand with both sides of your brain. Branding commonly is considered a critical part of any successful business, yet many still view it as merely a creative endeavor. The truth is that branding is just as much about strategy as it is about tactics. It's left brain PLUS right brain. It's logic PLUS magic. You need to approach it from both sides to get the full impact from your branding efforts.

Branding strategy PLUS tactics.

Strategy is the thinking behind your brand. It addresses how your brand is positioned against the competition. It includes what you stand for and what makes you different. It's the foundation on which you present your image. Brand strategy needs to be based on what makes you different, which is what people are looking for when they compare products and services.

Here are three keys to finding a unique strategic position:

1. Your customers currently are seeking it. Make sure it is really what they want, don't base it on what YOU want, but on what THEY want and need.
2. You are uniquely suited to delivering it. Play to your strengths. And make sure you can deliver.
3. Your competitors currently are NOT addressing it. Look around the competitive landscape. If you see a competitor with a similar strategic position, abandon your idea and keep searching.

When determining your strategy, try matching your brand to what your customers dream about. Think about what your customers and prospects dream about when it comes to products and services. Keep in mind that if you only give people what they already want, someone else will give them what they never dreamed possible.

Tactics make up the "plan of attack" for your brand positioning. It is how you plan to execute your strategy. Tactics include all the different touchpoints you have with your customers, your collateral pieces, your website, signage, advertising and e-mails. Do they all communicate your strategy and unique positioning? The style of your photography and the tone of your copy are also tactics. They are the personality that you wrap around your brand. Even though a solid strategy is critical to developing a strong brand, tactics are what make people fall in love with you. It's what they come in contact with that grabs their attention.



Here are four keys to executing your tactics:

1. Be different, be REALLY different. You must stand out. Period. Your customers are surrounded by marketing messages every day, so when thrown in the mix, does your brand stand apart?
2. Go beyond adequate. You can do that in several ways. Make sure that your collateral message isn't confusing. They don't want to work too hard to figure out who you are and what you do. You may need to rewrite your brand with this in mind. Customers do not remember adequate brands. Customers do not talk about adequate brands. Only competitors love adequate brands. Let your customers know your 'essence', your excellence in delivering what they need.
3. Be consistent. Identify all the points of contact you have with your customers and prospects. You might be surprised how many different ways your brand comes face to face with consumers. Review all of these various touchpoints and make sure you provide the same experience every time.
4. Be repetitive. Don't assume your customers know everything about you. You have to remind them again and again. Once you have pinpointed that one thing that makes you unique, tell that story every chance you get. Then, tell them again.

How do you market your brand?

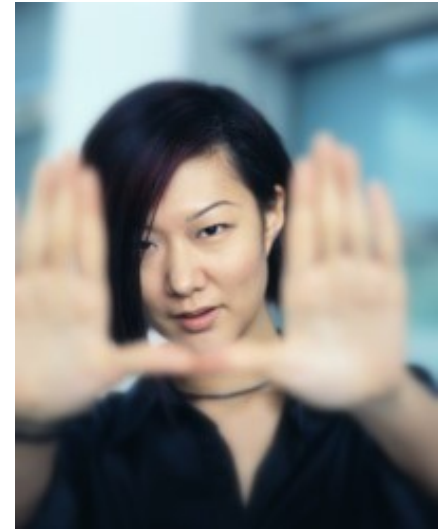
Take a clear look at all of your brand marketing components and ensure that they are all integrated. In the new year and new decade, improved integration of marketing channels, such as e-mails, direct mail, PR, media, collateral distribution, all will consistently achieve your defined brand vision. In the past year, online channels demonstrated greater value as a complement to direct mail and media applications, reinforcing the value of integrated programs.

What should your message be today?

Here is a way to grade your ability to grab attention, which is what you want to do, in a positive way, of course:

- ~ Do you really know what a customer sees first when receiving your collateral pieces? If so, have you done everything within your power to use this element to grab attention?
- ~ Are you using powerful graphics and copy that is also relevant to your customer's world?
- ~ Do your collateral readers and viewers on your website immediately know who you are and what you offer to them?
- ~ Are you offering solutions to relevant problems?
- ~ Is your offer clear and compelling?
- ~ Is there a single focus or have you bombarded them with many messages and images that only confuse and detract?
- ~ Is your brand image, such as logo, color palette, typography, clearly defined and consistently presented so brand recognition is possible?

Pause to reflect, which will allow you to see just what you have become to your customers, and a chance to ponder whether or not you both like what you see.



A quick tip on brand messaging:

~ Direct, short and to the point. Concentrate on customer pain and show a solution with your product or service.

~ Don't 'talk at' your audience, talk TO them, as you would a friend. Don't push 'authority', offer a subtle message in a friendly way. Develop messaging that is specific to the wants, needs and mindset, and dreams of your customer base, your target audience.

How about measuring or analyzing your brand?

You always want proof that your campaigns are impacting customers and generating revenue. As measurement tools become more precise, how brands measure the return on their investment is likely to become more complicated. You will have to pay attention to a broader range of data and work even harder to make sure that all parts of your business, whether it is sub-contractors, affiliates, sales staff or departments, operate in conjunction with your marketing program, that you are communicating the same message and that your brand vision is being consistent.

What about prospecting?

Since World War II, the 18-25 age range has been the sweet spot of American marketing. That is because young people historically represented an area of growth because of their willingness to try new things. They were still forming their brand preferences. The idea was that if you captured their hearts at that stage, you had them for life. Now they are all grown up and called Baby Boomers. Many in the marketing realm are now predicting that those baby boomers today will be a renewed focus in the coming year. Reinvention is the name of this game. You don't automatically have them for life anymore, everyone at every stage of life is open to marketing. Today, we are seeing the end of brand loyalty and the return to brand experimentation. People are more willing to try new brands than ever, and those over 50 years old are particularly open to new messages.

About Marketing Biz Professionals

Marilyn Dayton is the **Founder** of the company. As one of the originators of some of the more unique marketing vehicles in the nation, Marilyn Dayton has watched her creative marketing techniques empower, train and coach business clients in their marketing. In Marilyn's long career, she has proven to be an expert in creating peak performances for entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, managers, sales professionals, corporate employees and educators. She is compelling, empowering and compassionate in her training and strategies, and for the past several decades has helped hundreds of business clients reach their goals.

Marketing Biz Professionals has resources with experienced marketing, graphics, and business specialists that can help guide their clients to successful marketing whether around the corner or around the globe. We can assist and guide you from business and marketing analysis, graphic imaging and branding, custom content, through publication and distribution of any collateral piece. We can also design your logo, color palette, and website, as well as e-newsletters and blogs.

For more information about the ways we can help you achieve the strongest brand identity possible, visit us at

<http://www.marketingandbizpro.com> or contact:

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"There is so much more to your branding, but this workshop will at least get you started and on your way. Another tool in helping you understand branding is my white paper, which is available by e-mailing me your request. And any other help you need, I'm a quick phone call or e-mail away."

Marilyn Dayton,
your marketing adviser