



The Brand Building Guide For Small Businesses

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An Introduction To Branding

What Is A Brand?



Brand

Definition

According to AMA (American Marketing Association), a brand is 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 competitors.”

So you want to brand your business online?

No, branding does not mean simply opening a Facebook page or Twitter account. Your business brand is what separates you from your competition. In today's world driven by social media and constant change, branding is even more important for small businesses. Proper branding can have a significant positive impact on your revenues. But first things first, what is a brand? To explain the short way, your brand is what your customers think about you and your products.

Branding is more than your company colors, logo and website design. It is a holistic view of your business: what it stands for, its products or services. Branding is simply your business identity.



When branding your business, avoid the looks of chains or big brands. Try to carve out a unique identity. This can be challenging, but this is most important when it comes to branding. Also, most consumers are leaving the big brands in favor of independent establishments because of the attention or other value proposition they offer. This is part of the branding that the independent stores are leveraging on. Independent establishments can leverage their status to attract customers looking for authentic offerings that reflect how they feel. So, how do you brand your business for success online? Well, try starting with this:

Crafting A Branding Strategy!



Chapter 1: Crafting A Business Branding Strategy



Branding highlights the differences between you and your competitors. It helps your business stand out.

It is important to craft a business branding strategy in order to highlight key elements about your business that will make you successful.

Below are the key elements you should consider in your branding strategy.

a) Know Your Target Customers

To create the right identity for your business, you need to know who your customers are and what they need.



Your branding should act as an extension of your customers' values, needs and lifestyles. The way you reach out to them should be predictable and in visuals they can identify with. For example, if you are running an automobile sales business, a logo with an automobile image will identify you better to your customers. The needs of your target market can change over time. Your brand should also evolve to reflect the changes in your market.

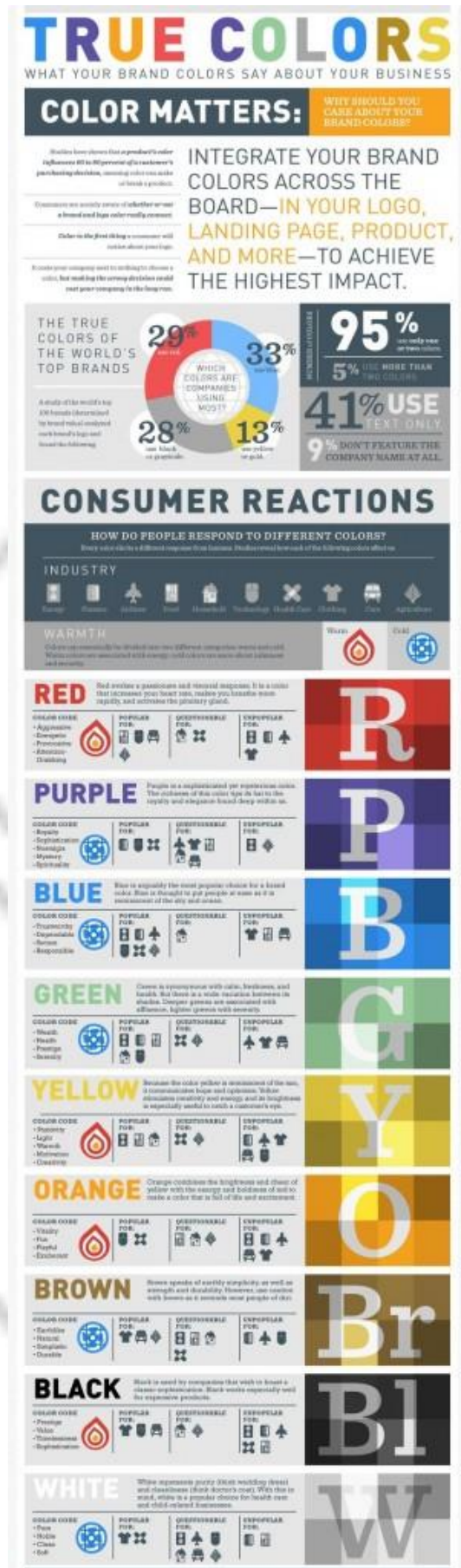
b) Stay Consistent

Your business identity and marketing should be consistent. Key elements such as your website, fliers, stationery and business cards should reflect your brand. Use your company colors consistently to enable customers to identify you easily.

Another area that you should be consistent is your ideals and they should reflect across all online channels you use. Define your ideals and be committed to them in all your business dealings and relations.

c) Be Visible & Simple

There are various ways to bolster your company's brand. A mascot, tagline, logo or catchy jingle can give your business significant visibility. The best brands are not complicated. Your customers should not need to make an effort to recognize you. Consider your online and offline presence when crafting your branding. Keep the style, design and colors of your business or products consistent. Use social networks to enhance your brand.



Chapter 2: Implementing An Online Branding Strategy



Creating a formidable brand online is not easy and can take time. There are various branding methods you can pursue. To stay on course with your branding, you need an implementation plan.

Online branding can be done on two major platforms: your company website/blog and social media networks.

Building Your Brand Through Your Website/Blog!

Your website is the first contact potential customers have with your company. If potential customers do an online search for your company, your company's main website should be one of the first items that pop up. The customer's perception of your company can and most likely will be determined by the look of your website, especially if the first visit to your company is through an online channel. This is why it should be professionally designed. A website that looks unprofessional will lead to loss of business, so it is crucial to keep in mind the following key points when developing and implementing an online branding strategy.



a) Overall Design

Have a professional website for your business. A well-designed website offers a good experience to users. Your customers should be able to easily navigate your site and find the information that they are looking for.

At a minimum, ensure the website has information about your company, products or services, and contact information. If you are affiliated with reputable clients or brands in your industry, mentioning them on your website can enhance your brand and increase trust with your potential customers.

Unfamiliar with how to develop a professional website for your business? Contact professionals, whether it be an individual freelancer, a small business or a large corporation. Meet with professionals, explore your options and then go from there. You want to ensure the job is done correctly as mistakes on your website can be very costly, especially if they are received rather negatively by your viewing audience.



b) Logo & Color Theme

Your website should have your logo and be designed with your business' colors. Your logo and colors help customers to immediately identify your business, which can be crucial to your sales. Do not underestimate the power of using your business colors for branding. Once your logo and colors are selected, keep everything consistent. Make sure that your business cards and other branding materials match your website.



Branding is mostly about what customers see about your business. Your logo is one of the things associated with your business. Get a professional logo that stands out and reflects your ideals. Stand out and be unique. Don't get being unique confused with having a complex design. Standing out does not always mean complexity, sometimes simplicity is what really catches the eye.

c) Your Voice

Your “voice” refers to the approach you take to various issues in your industry and how you relate to your prospects, customers, suppliers, and competitors. Get a website established and then develop it over time. Fill it with loads of useful content and other information for your viewers. This way, they can learn more about your brand and then pass that information on to others.

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26 things to note before you DEVELOP A WEBSITE

- 1 DOMAIN**
Choose a name that people can remember well and choose wisely (and appropriately) whether you will use .com, .net, or something else.
- 2 HOSTING**
Choose a reliable one look at how much capacity you need.
- 3 TECH**
Technology you use: HTML5, CSS3, PHP, jQuery, Javascript, etc.
- 4 PURPOSE**
What is the purpose of the website: business, corporate, e-commerce, etc.
- 5 LAYOUT & COLOR**
Color affects the 'feel' of your site. Neat layout is always preferred. Don't forget about footer text!
- 6 SITE MAP**
Clear site map & flow chart.
- 7 CONTENT**
Your website has to provide a good and informative content to the users. Target certain keywords to rank high in search engines. The type of content like language, picture, video, etc. have influence of how fast or how slow that website will load.
- 8 AUDIENCE**
You have to know who your audiences are, then you can build content that attract them.
- 9 ADVERTISEMENT**
Don't put too much advertisement in your website. If it is not necessary, don't put it here.
- 10 POP UP MESSAGE**
Prevent pop up messages. It is the most annoying type of advertising because of slow loading and sometimes you can't close it.
- 11 ATTRACTIVE DESIGN**
Good website should be simple, yet professional.
- 12 BUTTONS**
Good website should be simple, yet professional.
- 13 BACKGROUND**
You can choose from a clean look, colorful look, or you can consider patterned background too.
- 14 IMAGE**
Choose image carefully as it will create a lasting impression for everyone, so you want it to be good and memorable.
- 15 EASY NAVIGATION**
Users can easily find what they are looking for.
- 16 UNIQUE**
There are so many good website out there, but you have to make your website stand out from the other.
- 17 FRESH**
Keep your website up-to-date to keep visitors coming back.
- 18 OPTIMIZED**
A good website has to be search engine friendly. It means it is easy to find your website in the search engine.
- 18 CROSS BROWSER**
A good website has to be able to be viewed properly in all types of modern browser, example: Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Safari.
- 20 SCREEN RESOLUTION**
Formerly, web design made 980px in width. But as responsive web design is getting popular, a site can be designed up to 1230px in width.
- 21 SOCIAL MEDIA**
Integrate social media to your websites to facilitate easy content sharing.
- 22 TYPOGRAPHY**
Choose your typography. Legible font is definitely important. You don't want people to squint their eyes when reading your text.
- 23 REGISTRATION**
If visitors have to register to interact with your website, give them advantages when they do.
- 24 TRACKING & ANALYTICS**
With it, you can monitor how your website goes, and how to optimize it.
- 25 PROVIDE SECURITY**
Visitors have to feel safe when they leave their information in your website. Especially when they have to register their contacts detail or credit card number.
- 26 FOOTER**
Footer may not be the main thing in a site, but with a well-designed footer, you can impress your visitors.

Building Your Brand on Social Media!



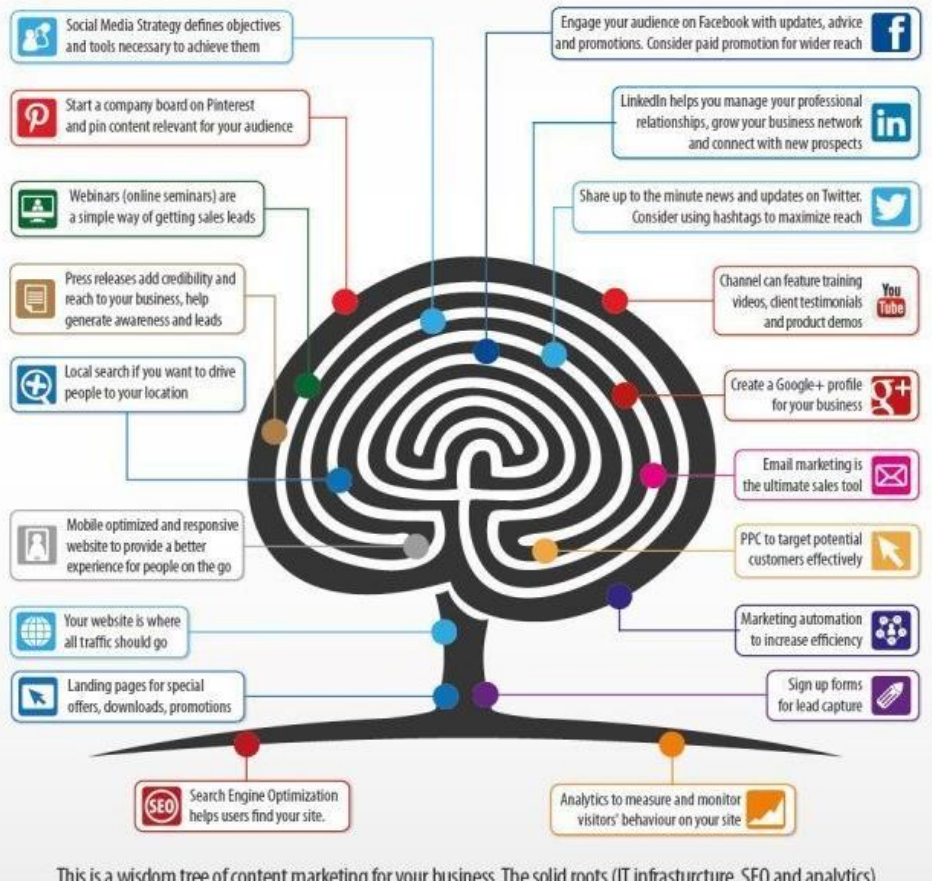
In today's world, social media cannot be ignored for the impact it can have on sales and brand awareness. People are talking on social media about your product or brand. Sites like Yelp and Google Places and other consumer review websites can give you an idea of how your target market perceives your company. Whether you take part in the conversation is up to you. However, it will be better to be part of the conversation and educate your prospects to influence their brand perception.

There are many social media networks where you can establish a presence. However, this does not mean all networks are important for your business. You only need a presence on the networks where a majority of your customers are. For most businesses, having a presence on Facebook and Twitter are a must. Pinterest and Google+ follow closely.

GROW YOUR BUSINESS

USING CONTENT MARKETING

Providing prospects with relevant content and engaging them in a conversation about their needs will create a unique relationship with your brand. In order to grow, businesses have to adapt content marketing into their strategy.



Each social network is unique and each requires a lot of time to build and maintain. Choose social media networks that best suit your brand's niche. Use each social network to share useful information with your viewers, as well as carving out stellar content they can share with others. Social media networks are a key element to building brand awareness.

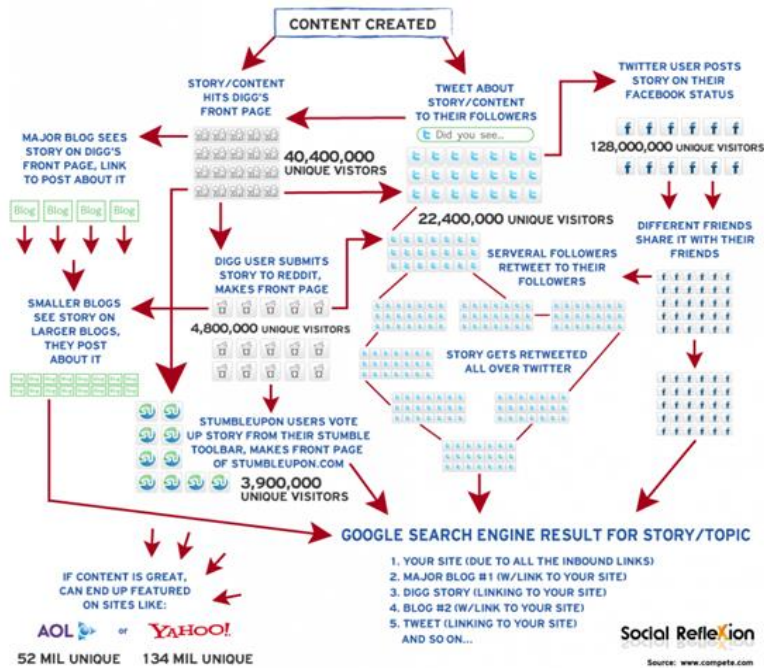
Chapter 3: Social Media Marketing The Right Way

The saying that the number of followers you have reflects your success in social media is wrong. The size of your market can however determine how many followers you will get on social media. Well-known brands like Walmart and even Facebook and Twitter themselves are able to attract millions of fans because they are all worldwide brands. If you are a local business, you should not be looking to reach that number. Don't expect to hit a home-run your first time at bat (although we are sure it has happened). Instead, start small, start local and work your way up!



Instead of looking at the number of followers you get, you should be checking your engagement with the followers and the leads or sales that result from your social media efforts. So, with that all said, how is social media marketing done correctly?

THE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECT



You need a comprehensive strategy for every social media network on which you are looking to engage with customers. Your strategy should include a content posting plan, rules of engagement, key success metrics to be measured, and so on.

When engaging online, make it about your customers rather than you. The best way to form a relationship with your prospects and to make them trust you is to help them. Find out what your prospects are saying about your brand and step in to compliment or educate them. Communicate with your audience or you could lose them! You also need to engage with prospects for some time before asking for a sale.

Best Practices For Branding Your Business On Social Media!



The first thing to remember is that social media is all about “socializing.” This means interacting with, listening to, as well as giving feedback to your prospects. You need to engage with your customers. The following are some best practices of using social media to build your brand:

a) Share content that is educational or entertaining to your audience. Have your content reflect your company, but be about your audience.

b) Treat your customers like royalty. Listen and respond to them, check their complaints and ask for their feedback on various aspects of your business. People are more loyal to brands that listen to them. The old saying that the customer is always right reflects very strongly here. Make sure to always be professional with your responses. Do not resort to the path of name calling or making excuses if your business is in the wrong. How disgruntled customers are handled on social media can make or break your business.

c) Be available to your customers. Make it easy for them to reach you through the social media channels on which you are interacting. Answer queries fast; strive to answer emails within 12 hours of receiving them. Don't wait multiple days or weeks to answer inquiries, this makes customers lose trust and interest in your brand.

In today's competitive business environment, you need to find your customers wherever they are. Your competitors are already working hard to get the same customers. Get ahead of your competitors and utilize the wide variety of social media networks out there. You can reach your prospects and customers on social media by holding contests, offering giveaways, using paid advertisements, joining groups where your potential customers are and engaging with them, and so on.



Chapter 4: Tracking Your Branding

Any branding or marketing campaign should be tracked to gauge its impact.

Implementing brilliant campaigns is just one part of the work. You also need to find out whether your message is being received and making an impact on your target customers. Some of the questions you should ask yourself include:

- **Are customers identifying my company according to the brand proposition I am marketing?**
- **How do customers react when they come across my brand message?**
- **Which branding methods seem to be most effective? Which seem to be least effective?**
- **Are there branding techniques I am using that can be fine-tuned to offer more impact?**

Tracking can enable you to determine the success of your branding campaign and optimize complimenting strategies for improved results. You should track your campaign efforts whether you are a small business, large business or an individual business owner. Tracking enables you to determine if your message is well received by your audience.

Conclusion: Be Innovative!

Be Innovative With Your Branding & Social Media Efforts!

If you are a small business, you may not have the large branding or marketing budgets of the big companies. However, this does not mean your branding efforts should be minimized. Be creative with your online branding and do something out of the ordinary to catch the eyes of others out there in the world!

Always put your customers first in any branding decisions. Don't dilute your brand position with indiscriminate discounting to keep up with the competition. Instead of slashing prices, try offering something more that will differentiate your company. This is what branding is all about, standing out from the competition with a unique value proposition.

Was Our Branding Guide Able To Assist You?

We hope that our complete guide was able to assist you in your digital marketing efforts. Contact us today for more helpful tips & tricks!

Contact Us Today!

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