

LOGO AND LOOK: SELECTING THE VISUAL ELEMENTS THAT SUPPORT YOUR BRAND VISION

Developing a professional image and implementing it consistently establishes an identity that others quickly recognize and remember. Your logo is an important part of your image building or “branding” campaign. Granted, your logo is just one of your many branding efforts, but it is important ... just as it everything you do, say, print and display. All these things either develop or detract from your brand “image”.

Your Logo

Much emphasis is placed on the logo as the visual identifier for a company. Many companies get caught up in trying to create the “perfect” logo – something that represents and conveys every aspect of their business strategy at first glance. They think that the right icon will become the next Nike Swoosh™. True a good logo can help create customer recognition of your company, but it can't explain your business. It doesn't create the personal experience that is the foundation of brand awareness. And to create the kind of awareness that enables a logo to stand on its own takes a great deal of resources.

Small businesses need an appropriate logo – one that suits their industry, company, and personality. They shouldn't try to capture every detail of their business vision, values, and strategy in a logo. It's only a piece of the entire ensemble – like a brooch or a tie tack.

Creating the Image

THINK PERSONALITY

Before selecting a logo image, think about what kind of Brand Personality you want to project? Formal? Serious? Bold? Energetic? Capable? Light hearted? High tech? It's also about your customers... who will you be targeting? What kind of image will appeal to them? Check out your competitors. What kind of images are they using?

Then ask yourself will your business processes support the kind of image you've chosen? Make sure all your employees understand what your image means to them in how they should present themselves and interact with customers. Make sure you can deliver what you promise – be it service, great products, or panache.

HAVE IT PROFESSIONALLY CREATED

Have your logo professionally created by someone who understands the requirements of the many forms in which it will be used – print media, projection, display, broadcast, and even embroidery. Each of these media deals with color in a different way. Some colors can be displayed but not printed and vice versa. Also think about all the different sizes that your logo must be reproduced. A busy image that looks great on a large display probably won't look good when reduced to a tiny image on your business card.

Bear in mind the emotional response of customers to your visual image. Does the color elicit the kind of response you are looking for? Is the particular graphic something that customers can relate to? Is it relevant to your overall business strategy?

THINK LONG TERM

Colors go in and out of style. Icons or characters which are “in” today may be VERY “out” in a short period of time. Brands that have endured have used more universal images: AT&T uses a globe, Coca-Cola just using their name, Disney and it’s characters (Mickey Mouse, etc), Prudential uses the rock... all enduring images. They are also brands that consistently live up to their broader image in the marketplace.

THINK GLOBALLY

The implications of images differ from culture to culture as well. Are you planning to sell internationally? Make sure your image carries the right cultural connotation in the countries you plan to do business will. For example, the rural American mailbox icon used in early e-mail systems had no meaning in most other cultures.

THINK ABOUT THE WHOLE GRAPHICS PACKAGE

Remember that the logo is not the most important aspect of your Brand Image, although that’s where much emphasis is placed. Everything that is used around the logo also contributes to your image. Color schemes. Fonts. Graphics. Flow charts. Web icons. Are all of these consistent with your brand vision? Do they all support both the explicit and implicit aspects?

The look of all marketing brochures, documents and presentations contributes to the overall “brand image.” And here’s where one of today’s biggest problems lies. The proliferation of desktop publishing software has taken brand image from the hands of trained graphic designers and resulted in a lot of “do-it-yourself” marketing materials. Start-up and small companies often lack a consistent brand “look and feel” or create materials with “cookie cutter” templates that don’t distinguish them from the crowd. For example, presentations, web sites, and marketing materials look different depending on which employee created them. They often combine a rainbow of colors, multiple fonts, overused clip art, and busy backgrounds that detract from the message, if not make it illegible.

True, desktop publishing has made it easy for “everyone” to create their own presentations, letters, and other documents but it hasn’t given “anyone” the training in design principles, printing, and presentation techniques. These are the disciplines that are required to create a brand image that carries a clear consistent look, and feel across all corporate materials.

The Big Picture

More than the logo, remember the broader definition of image. Beyond the visual image of your branded materials, your company “persona” is part of your overall brand image. Your executives and employees are ambassadors of your brand. How they interact with customers, how they behave in the business setting and sometimes personally, and even how they look, impact a company’s “image.”

Whether we like it or not, people make judgments about us based on personal image. Just as they’ll make a decision about another person in about 20 seconds based on their image, so too will they judge your brand image. A compelling message can miss the mark if the audience is distracted by the wrong kind of image.

This article is the third of a nine-part article series on branding called *The ABC's of Small Business Marketing* developed in conjunction with "The Business Owner" newsletter.

May-June 2004 Issue: *Your Marketing Message: Back to the Drawing Board*

July-Aug '04 Issue: *Avoid Marketing Mayhem: Establishing Your Brand Vision*

[Sept-Oct '04 Issue: *Logo and Look: Selecting the Visual Elements that Support Your Brand Vision*](#)

Nov-Dec '04 Issue: *Tag Lines and Ad Copy: What You Say Should Support Your Brand Vision*

Jan-Feb '05 Issue: *Guided Missile Marketing: Selecting Mediums with Maximum Payload*

Mar-April '05 Issue: *Marketing for Dummies? Build in Quality Control*

May-June '05 Issue: *Master Your Marketing: Monitoring and Feedback Enable Continuous Improvement*

July-Aug '05 Issue: *Creative Creatures: Working with Marketing, PR and Ad Professionals*

Sept-Oct '05 Issue: *Win the Marketing Game: Be Proactive or Perish*

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