

## **Brand Management for Small Companies**

### **Branding Is Essential**

Today's customers are dealing with an overwhelming number of choices. In a market of too many choices, what do you buy? You go with what you trust. The familiar. The recognizable. The one you know. So, today a strong brand is essential.

### **Everybody Needs It**

Small companies need good brand management just as much, if not more than, large companies. And it's not just for products. It's just as important for small service companies and entrepreneurs trying to establish a market position. First impressions are important – whether of your company or you personally. Statistics show that when meeting another person for the first time we form our opinions of them within a few seconds. The same thing happens with your brand image. How you present your company to potential clients is as important as how you present yourself.

### **It's All about Image**

In practice, the creation of a consistent image is as much about what you don't do as what you do. If you intend to call on executive level customers to convince them to hire you on a professional basis, would you wear a Hawaiian shirt, a tweed jacket, plaid shorts, and work boots to an interview? Of course not. You would present yourself in an appropriate manner. Sound silly? Yes. But many people do the equivalent with the materials they use to represent themselves and their enterprises.

### **Message Development**

The content of your corporate messages needs to be appropriate for its audience, as much as it needs to have the correct look and feel. It should be tailored to your audience. Who is going to make the decision to buy your product or service? Are you talking to CEOs or engineers? Sales or manufacturing personnel? HR departments or marketing teams? Each audience comes with its own perceptions and expectations. You need to know your audience to make the most effective presentation.

### **Need for Training**

The proliferation of desktop publishing software and the elimination of many corporate graphics departments has taken brand image from the hands of trained graphic designers and distributed it throughout organizations. This 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 message, look, and feel across all corporate materials.

As a result, presentations today often combine a rainbow of colors, multiple fonts, overused clip art, and busy backgrounds that detract from the message, if not make it illegible. Additionally, today there are a wide variety of electronic media – web sites, on-screen presentations, video, and TV. All have very different and often conflicting requirements for both design elements and color quality. Logos are often complex and hard to reproduce in electronic media. Colors vary from one medium to another. Images that look good on paper don't necessarily look good on a web site. Conversely, electronic images don't always print as expected.

### **Brand Management Should Be an Internal Process**

In the past, brand guideline systems have been kept in a binder and managed by graphics department. In today's electronic workplace, this no longer works. As described above, everyone has the ability to create “branded” documents. This should be effortless, facilitated by corporate processes and information management systems. Call CattleLogos to make brand management a part of your corporate DNA.