

Branding

By Bob Osgoodby

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No, we're not talking about burning your brand into the hide of a steer, but rather into the mind of your potential customers. We're going to discuss effective techniques for telling your customers who you are, and what you do.

One of the maxims of any advertising campaign is to try to make your company a household word. Many of the major corporations such as Budweiser and Wendy's have discovered how to do this, and we could take a few lessons from them.

The Internet today, gives the smaller players a "level playing field" with some of big guys. If we are to succeed, it is vitally important to recognize what they are doing in their branding programs.

First, and foremost, if you are serious about doing business on the Internet, you must have a web site. When visitors arrive there, it should be immediately obvious as to what you actually do. Too many web site developers forget this, and try to impress their visitors with graphics that take too long to load.

Don't forget - people visiting your site have come there for a reason. If you don't make it immediately clear what you do, they may just "click away". Any good ad will feature what benefit the person will receive by doing business with you. You want your "brand" to be loud and clear, and not hidden behind a lot of "glitz".

You must have contact information. A picture of you can go a long way to humanizing your web site. People prefer doing business with other people, not a nameless company, without anyway of contacting them, other than a form to fill out. You must have a physical address, and preferably a phone number where someone can contact you. The more you can make your potential clients comfortable with you, the better your odds of getting their business.

Verbal content is king. If your copy is not good, you will not succeed. Many web sites simply throw up a few graphics and a few "buzzwords", and wonder why they don't get a good response. People have taken the time to come to your site and are looking for answers. A visitor to your web site, should leave with few, if any unanswered questions.

So basically, what is a brand? Your business name can be your brand, but it must tell the public exactly what you do. If it doesn't, you must create a brand, and feature that in all your advertising. It should be the first thing people see when they visit your web site.

The web site - <http://ListsAreUs.com> - gives a good example of branding. On the first page, without having to arrow down, you immediately know what the web site is all about. All of their advertising, which is specific to the market they wish to reach, carries this brand.

If you are to succeed in your online business, you must have a brand that will not only be remembered, but reinforces what you are trying to promote. But that is not all that must be done.

Newsletters and Ezines, specific to the market you wish to target are an excellent way to reach potential clients. While your ads should be brief, as people scanning a publication may skip by your ad, it must be compelling. This is where your brand is so important.

A web site with a minimum of information however, will normally not obtain your goals. Face it, you got them to visit your site with your ad, and now they are looking for answers. If they don't find what they are looking for, the odds are they won't come back. While your ad must be brief, here you can (and must) tell the entire story.

Branding is critical to your business. Once you get "your" brand to be a household name for your target market, you are well on your way down the road of ecommerce.

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