

**Brand Your Way  
to Success**

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## **Brand Your Way To Success**

Produced By: [www.LogoNerds.com](http://www.LogoNerds.com)

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## Eight Tips for Effective Brand Positioning

No matter how long you've been in business, chances are good that you are engaged in developing and promoting your brand positioning strategy. You'll invest plenty of time in the process of evaluating your products or services in terms of market share, sales and customer base and comparing this information to that of your competitors. You'll work to determine how your customers perceive your business and its major offerings and use the detailed findings to establish your business at the proper place within that all important target market.

Your business position within the target market will determine your business's degree of success. If you think you can maneuver into a more profitable place, do so by adjusting your products or services to more closely match the desired position (known as re-positioning), or pursue strategies that change customer perception of the products and services offered by your competitors (de-positioning).

Here are some strategic tips that can help you to be as effective as possible during your brand positioning process:

1. Understand brand positioning as fully as you can, especially in the way that it directly affects your business. Businesses, especially smaller ones, are very diverse in their needs and offerings, and it might take quite a bit of effort to even be sure that you are positioning yourself within the correct market. Look closely at the businesses sharing your pool of regular customers, their purchasing patterns and the roles that your business plays in their everyday lives.
2. Develop the most efficient method possible for gathering customer information. Remember that you're trying to get inside their heads and back out again with an unvarnished look at

how they see your business in terms of the benefit that it provides for them. You might consider questionnaires, phone surveys or online surveys and offer a small bonus to compensate customers for their valuable time.

3. Determine which of your products and/or services are the most popular or powerful, so that you can use them to build on or adjust your overall positioning strategy.
4. Rank all of your products and/or services in terms of positive customer review and in relation to those of your competitors.
5. List the most popular group of attributes that describe your business and products from the viewpoints of your customers and combine them to reach your ideal vector...the position in your target market from where your business can operate at the highest possible level of strength.
6. Product-based businesses can complete the positioning process more easily than service based businesses. After all, your customers can see, touch and watch demonstrations of your products to see how they work and visualize their benefits. Here are some hints for exploring how customers perceive your business and its services:
  7. Create simulations, descriptions or case studies showing proven results.
  8. Find out how customers view your services in terms of value, results and convenience.
  9. Regardless of your business type, take the information about customer perception that you've gathered, determine your top benefits and attributes and use them to determine your current positioning and how far that point is from your ideal vector in the marketplace.
10. Decide whether you are satisfied with the current positioning of your business, or whether you need to change your strategy. Consider your target market and decide if your business

is positioned in such a manner that it maximizes every opportunity for visibility in that market.

Finally, keep in mind that positioning can be either an active or passive process. If you choose not to fully engage in it – it will still take place. Don't give up the valuable opportunity to monitor and influence the process and increase profitability.

**“Your business position within the target market will determine your business’s degree of success”**

# Online Tools that Build the Brand Power of Your Business

Brand building is a fundamental part of building a successful business – on or offline. An effective brand building strategy creates a memorable impression that serves to establish your business as a field or industry leader. These days, even brick and mortar businesses are compelled to have an online presence, so whether you are selling handmade jewelry exclusively online or seeking to expand your professional practice with a new website, it makes sense to use these online tools to build your brand and expand your reach.

## ***Your Domain Name***

Even before you create a company website, you'll choose a domain name, also known as a URL. When you purchase it, choose carefully – it will be the Internet address for your business. Choosing your domain name wisely can give your website a leg up in the SEO process – and can mean the difference between getting noticed by potential customers and coming in on page ten of the search engine results. Use your business name to increase brand power, and consider additional names to increase web traffic using keywords related to your business.

## ***Signature File***

Create a signature file that includes your business name, tagline, and if possible, logo and use it in all of your emails, when posting on blogs and in online forums. A well developed signature file establishes your brand around the Internet and builds it by attracting visitors to your website.

## ***Logo***

Some business advisers frown upon spending a lot of time and money on logo design, but a

quality logo builds online branding instantly and powerfully. Here are some guidelines for using your logo to make the right impression with your online audience:

- Be creative in design, select a logo design that is both eye catching and relevant to your business purpose.
- Be sure that your logo is professional in design, has a high quality appearance that includes readability and attention to detail.
- Select a logo design that sparks interest in your business along with excitement and energy.

Keep in mind that whatever images and thoughts are evoked in the minds of your viewers when they see your logo will be associated with your business automatically, so use this very powerful online brand building tool with care.

### ***Web Site Design***

Your web site is your most important online branding tool. It represents the place where all of the elements of a highly recognizable brand come together. If your business is already running successfully in an offline capacity, you'll need to extend the elements of your offline strategy to your website, because uniformity is key to avoiding confusion in the minds of your target customers.

Pay special attention to the appearance and readability of the font size and type that you choose for your text, to the colors used in your graphics and page backgrounds, and to any photos and images that you decide to post. Not only do these elements attract or repel visitors in terms of aesthetics, they are a vital part of an effective online branding process. For example, you might favor orange, a color that conveys happiness, but if your website offers professional services, you are better off with a shade of blue that conveys trustworthiness and loyalty.

You may like the look of an ornate font, but if readers have a hard time scanning your pages, the brand building power is lost.

### *Bringing it all together*

Building a powerful online brand for your business is a truly comprehensive effort that requires careful planning and execution. Be sure that the visual elements of your brand are consistent wherever they appear. As you expand your online presence to such areas of the Internet as blogs, social networking sites, article directories and forums, be sure that your logo, colors, contact information and quality of content remain consistent in their representation of your business as a trusted industry leader.

**“An effective brand building strategy creates a memorable impression that serves to establish your business as an industry leader”**

## Use Promotional Products to Enhance Your Brand and Build your Bottom Line

Promotional products provide a valuable and inexpensive way to enhance your brand and expand your customer base. A useful, quality gift leaves a positive impression on current and future customers contributes to your company's image. It also works as an enduring testimonial/ advertisement that remains in the home or office, ready to generate new or repeat business or valuable word of mouth recommendation.

There are literally thousands of promotional products that you can use to build your brand recognition. Here are some points to consider when you are leafing through the catalogs or scrolling through the websites in search of the most effective value for your promotional dollar:

- **Choose a product that relates strongly to your type of business.** Your logo and contact information might look good on a super sponge, but if you're a professional, an attractive ball point pen in your company's colors will convey your image more effectively. For a business that sells specialty coffee, a sturdy and ample mug is a natural choice. The point to remember here is that brand power is achieved more readily when your new customer recognizes who and what your business provides immediately, whenever they look at or use your promotional gift.
- **Don't skimp on quality.** If your budget is small, distribute a small token such as a pad of printed posted notes rather than an umbrella that turns inside out when the user gets caught by a wind gust. Rational, fair or not, people will judge the quality of your goods or service by the quality of your promotional gifts. If you're going to use this method to instill

trust in your corporate image and inspire people to buy from you, give them the same quality that you would provide if they were paying for the product.

- **Choose a useful product.** Potential customers tend to be very pleased when they receive a promotional gift that they can actually use. They feel as though it was chosen especially for them, and this appreciative sense of intimacy creates a closer business relationship and generates trust in your brand –building it while attracting new revenue. Most people have more fridge magnets than they will ever actually use. A magnetic note pad with attached pen or pencil is more likely to be used, and your brand is more likely to grow in recognition.

Once you've selected and purchased your promotional gifts, distribute them at every possible opportunity. Give them away at trade shows, conferences, in your office or shop. Offer them on your website in exchange for contact information or to attract sign-ups for your email newsletter. Package them with merchandise shipments and give them to clients, customers and business colleagues.

Before long, you'll see the results in the form of more new and returning customers, and a broader recognition of your business as a trusted leader in your corner of the consumer marketplace. Carefully choosing and distribution promotional products is just one way to build your brand – but as you can see it is a powerful as well as an investment that reaps rewards far into the future.

## Turn Pennies into Profit with Affordable Promotional Products

Are you looking for an affordable way to reach out to your target marketplace, expand your brand and increase sales? Consider these promotional products – especially if you are a small business with a limited budget. They are surprisingly affordable and have shown great results in terms of brand building and creating customer goodwill. They also give you the advantage of a constant presence in the home or office of your customer, ready to recommend your products or services whenever the need arises.

**Magnets** remind people that your business is out there, ready to serve them at a moment's notice. They are so popular that many people keep collections on their fridge, filing cabinet, or desk – wherever they can find a metal surface to adhere them. They are often used to keep photos or papers attached to the surface, but more often become a sales or service directory for quick reference – a great value for minimal cost.

**Key chains** are always useful for car, home, office and garage keys. Every time your customer uses keys, he or she is reminded of your business. New customers develop an awareness of your brand and returning customers are reminded of their past experiences or perhaps that they need to do business with you again soon.

**Pens**, ball point or felt tip are favorites, especially for businesses where they are a staple tool. Banks, professional offices, educational institutions, booksellers, arts and craft stores and websites find that their customers appreciate writing tools as a promotional gift. Make sure it is a high quality pen that will last as long as you want your business to remain on the radar of its user.

**Mouse pads** are wonderful, especially for businesses related to computer sales, repair, or IT services, or that cater to business or professional offices such as supply stores. They serve as a desktop billboard that advertises your business 24/7.

**Stickers** are versatile and can be collected or placed in strategic places as a reminder of your products or services as well as to develop brand recognition over an extended period of time.

**Calendars** are very useful – everyone needs them, refers to them regularly and dislikes the chore of going out and buying them. Customers appreciate your business providing them and gain a positive image of your brand.

**Mugs** are the promo product with nine lives. They are always useful to someone. When people accumulate too many in their home or office, they give them away, and those bearing your logo start a whole new promotional life. Nobody throws a good mug into the trash.

**Hats** are especially popular among collectors and children of all ages. You can tailor the design to a specific event – such as a visor for a sporting event – or choose an all purpose favorite that can be worn for years, building brand recognition in your community.

**T-Shirts** are much appreciated for a variety of reasons, and if the color, style and logo are impressive enough – they'll advertise your business everywhere the wearer goes. People will notice – and your brand will grow stronger.

**Post it Pads** printed with your company logo are low cost and valuable because people use them. They also get passed along with the note – so each sheet in the pad can potentially count as a contact with a new client.

These promotional devices can turn pennies into profit. They build lasting brand recognition and advertise on a continuous basis. Purchase quality items that present your company logo, taglines and contact information in an attractive and eye catching manner you'll realize maximum return and sent into motion maximum brand and profit building power.

## Cartoon Logos, Mascots, Grab Attention and Build Your Brand

All too often, the difference between sluggish sales and rousing success for small business can be found in the advertising and branding programs. One small adjustment in the strategy can make a major difference in terms of getting noticed over and above the competition.

Small business owners are finding that a cartoon character logo and/or mascot often makes the difference, especially in industries and markets where the competition is already tight, with economic conditions making it even tighter. Cartoon character logos are often more costly, especially for a quality product, but companies that are willing to pay a little extra are often surprised and pleased when the extra attention and business more than make up for the initial outlay.

Take for example the Canadian dentist who made the news recently after winning a Marketer of the Year Award. After assessing his completion, he realized that most dental advertisements were nearly identical. He set out to differentiate himself by creating an animated character of a man with an obvious toothache. He wrote cartoons and translated his character to a mascot that appears at local events and marches in parades, breaking out of the 'Happy tooth & toothbrush' mold used by most other dentists who chose to build their brand using a character. His branding effort paid off in terms of attracting plenty of attention and new patients as well.

Consider also the iconic logos that have been around for decades, such as Mr. Clean and the Pillsbury Dough Boy. Major companies have long accepted the effectiveness of choosing the right animated character mascot for their logos. They knew that:

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- Cartoon character mascots and logos achieve instant recognition for your brand and products. This was very valuable when reading skills were low, but applies now in a global sense when language can be a barrier to effective brand recognition.
- Using a character to promote your business conveys a unique personality picture of your business, and a level of intimacy that extends beyond words.
- Character images enhance product images – for example, the Mr. Clean character is strong and shiny, suggesting product power and an appealing result that will not disappoint.
- Competitive advantage is key. Once the markets began filling up and the competitive field grew larger, the importance of getting enough brand attention to differentiate determined the companies that would grow to multinational giant or stay regional. Character logos and mascots generate more conversation and attention than their unanimated counterparts.
- Character logos and mascots exert greater memory power. And getting customers to remember that you exist and what you provide is a good part of the battle.
- A mascot benefits your business directly – in terms of boosting morale among your employees and creating a team spirit.

It is important to select the right mascot for your business. With a little creativity, most small businesses can find a character that brings their product or service to life in the minds of their potential customers. A pet food company can use a dog or cat, craft supplies sellers can animate a pair of scissors, anything that connects and solidifies the brand. Try it – your small business might just end up with a big reputation.

## The Top Ten Internet Brands: Learn from their Success Strategies

A review of the top ten Internet brands brings to light a group of successful branding strategies. These are companies that researched their markets extensively, developed their products and services to meet consumer need and preference, and then planned and executed the brand building strategies that propelled them to the top of the industry – the most recognizable and popular businesses on the Internet.

Here are the top ten companies in terms of brand recognition, strength and profit potential. They all operate globally, taking full advantage of available web media to promote themselves and sell their products. They all provide products and services targeted toward business and consumer use, and aim to improve the fortunes and the lives of the consumers they attract. Consider their beginnings, strategies and current industry standings and see what you can learn about brand building from their stories.

- **Google** – not a surprise, really. The company began as a user-friendly search engine and branched out by offering other services- all geared toward the user. It continued to grow by partnering with other entities and acquiring smaller companies to increase offerings. Google marketed itself as a user dedicated, non –greed oriented company that was considerate of the environment and has benefited from positive, wide spread word of mouth publicity. Its logo is widely recognized and is customized for special occasions and holidays. As with most of the Internet services based companies, it offers free products that can eventually lead into paid services that users ‘graduate’ to purchasing. Much of the company’s revenue comes from innovative advertising sales programs.

- **Yahoo** – This older Internet access portal survived the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s by partnering with other companies and making wise acquisitions and additions to its range of services. The brand remains vital, some say, because it recognizes that brand building on the Internet largely depends on offering logically simple products that work well for the all important user. Advertising services account for about 88% of Yahoo’s revenue.
- **MSN/Windows Live** - The current brand, Windows Live, was formed by Microsoft when the company rebranded MSN and many of its services, adding new ones that dovetail with its VISTA operating system. It covers information, personal connections and special interest software. There was some initial confusion in the rebranding, but as VISTA use spreads, it appears to be diminishing. As with other Microsoft software, brand dissemination is enhanced by programs preinstalled on new computers.
- **Microsoft** – This software giant began operation in 1975 and became widely known as the market for home computers accelerated. Today, it operated three divisions – Business, Entertainment and Devices. A long history of acquisitions, legal disputes and innovative product offerings have resulted in both positive and negative publicity, and some say that the company’s strategy of emulating and then eliminating the competition has gained it almost singular status in its field, but at the cost of much customer goodwill.
- **AOL Media Network** – AOL began as one of the first paid internet portals. The company found its niche market by catering to the non-computer literate customers at the advent of personal computing. Over the years, reports of dubious practices involving issues like customer service, billing, etc cost the company subscribers, but brand loyalty has carried the company through troubled times and it remains one of the largest service providers in the industry.

- **YouTube** – The appealing concept of video sharing for everyone brought YouTube to the forefront of Internet companies. Some services rank only Google and Yahoo ahead of YouTube in terms of online traffic. In fact, it is now a subsidiary of Google, and is banned in some countries due to its unregulated content. This brand has succeeded by making the user its complete focus.
- **Fox Interactive Media** – a conglomerate brand created by its parent company, Newscorp, this brand is basically an umbrella set up to organize the media arms of Fox TV, Fox Sports and Fox News, and offer advanced interactive media services online to support those media outlets.
- **Wikipedia** – the online encyclopedia is the only top media brand that is a non-profit enterprise. Worldwide reach and language translation has built the brand, along with Interactive principles similar to that of YouTube. Despite criticism of its reliability, Wikipedia remains popular as a quick and straightforward information source. Its unique logo pictures a puzzle piece globe, partially assembled with contributions from around the globe.
- **eBay** – this popular brand has become the gold standard for online auctions and shopping. The company also owns Paypal, the online money transfer system that has greatly assisted its own operation. Charity auctions and auctions of famous objects have created publicity for the business, which operates around the globe, offering buyers and sellers the advantage of a worldwide audience.
- **Apple** – The computer hardware and software company that began with a niche as an educational leader, the company established its brand with hardware innovations such as the laptop, ipod, iphone and other products. Apple built its brand with innovation and created a reputation as a maverick company. The Apple logo, a silhouette of the fruit with a

bite missing has evolved from multi color to monochromatic over the years and is one of the most easily recognized in the world.

What do most of these companies have in common in terms of branding that can be used to step up your company's brand building efforts? Here's a short list, see if you can add to it:

- Brands convey a user-centered company image
- Most brands offer at least some free or low cost services
- Brands suggest highly innovative products and/or advertising
- Brands suggest some philanthropic or community involvement – building loyalty
- Brands have developed memorable logos
- Companies have developed unique products or missions as a foundation upon which to build their brands.

# Differentiate Your Business and Rise Above the Competition

One vital component of building a highly recognizable brand for your business is to find its unique attributes, and then build upon them. Take a look at the highly successful companies in the business world and you'll see that they have something in common – they've discovered how they can provide their customers with products and service that they can't get anywhere else. They provide quality and a customer relationship that keeps customers returning and purchasing.

The first step in the differentiation process is competition research. List your major competitors and gather all of the business intelligence available about their products, services, corporate structure and size, corporate culture, mission and vision statements, pricing structures and customer service policies. Don't forget copies of their ads, brochures, business cards and any other collateral materials that you can access. Evaluate all of this and ask yourself the following:

- Which competitors represent the closest match to your business?
- What are the strengths of these competitors – product range, price, years in business, established customer base, excellence in customer service?
- What are your competitor's chief weaknesses?
  - Are they in an out of the way location? Do they operate a mediocre website or no website at all?
  - Do they suffer from a lack of strategic advertising, or leave something to be desired in terms of service?

- Is there anything absolutely unique about your competitors and the way they conduct business? Read testimonials, if they are available, and find out the things that their customers appreciate most. Is there anything that they do that you can't offer?

Make a list of all of this information, and then turn your attention to your own business. Gather your own information together and compare it. Include all the documentation listed above. Spread everything out and honestly evaluate your business from a comparative viewpoint.

After you've taken some time to let it all sink in, ask yourself:

- What unique qualities do you see in your business that the competition lacks?
  - Do you offer discounts and special promotions more often?
  - Do you offer a larger product range with hard to find items?
  - Is your service department more extensive? Do you offer deep shipping discounts?
  - Do you have a more modern and appealing storefront or website?
  - Have you adopted a community issue to sponsor or champion?
- What are you able to promise and deliver to your customer base that your competition cannot?
  - Do you have network connections that can deliver merchandise at a lower price?
  - Can your company innovate and create new products or services that enhance your current offerings?
  - Can you partner with a related business to offer dual promotions and increase your exposure?
  - Is your service team uniquely qualified to offer training and consultation?

These suggestions are meant to get your analytical juices flowing. The actual questions you'll ask will depend upon the type of business you own, your distinctive market and methods of promotion and delivery.

Next, make a list of all of the differences between your products or services and those of your closest competitors. Consider selection, price, quality, speed and method of delivery. Then consider ways to use these differences as a way of positioning your business as special, unique and able to handle the needs and preferences of your customers as no other business can.

**“Take a look at the highly successful companies in the business world and you'll see that they have discovered how they can provide their customers with products and service that they can't get anywhere else”**

## Compelling Design + Smart Placement = Successful Banner Ad Strategy

Banner ads have been getting a bad rap for quite a while now, as online marketers turn to pay per click strategies and other more appealing, higher return methods of boosting website traffic and sales. Marketers and viewers complain that they are annoying to the point where frustrated users ignore them deliberately. But technological advances have made problems with loading and viewing ads disappear, and new targeting technology offers some of the flexibility of PPC programs along with the brand recognition building power of an attention grabbing visual display.

Here are some strategic pointers for creating and placing banner ads that will help you save time and money while building your brand and growing your business:

- **Design customized banners for each website.** If they are TOO identical, they will blend in and not grab the necessary attention from users. If the design is too discordant, however, it conveys a lack of consideration to the website owner and a careless attitude to the potential customer. Colors, images and fonts need to complement the site instead of cloying with its design.
- **Use compelling images and copy.** Banner copywriting is a skill and more time consuming than you may think. It involves distilling a message that is normally conveyed by a paragraph into a few short words or one very short sentence aimed at compelling viewers to click. Choose images carefully – find the most relevant and logical match to the copy possible. Research shows that banners that communicate the benefits of your product/service clearly are most effective at their purpose – getting users to click on them.

- **Use new technology wisely.** Shifting, blinking and dancing banners are easier to create and view with widespread technological upgrades, but don't abuse the technology and annoy users. Use them to enhance the impact of your message, not to obliterate it. If you want really useful technological help, take advantage of targeting programs that use ISP tracking to display your ads to users with a high likelihood of interest in your products and services.
- **Test for functionality.** Be sure that your banner ad operates properly and that it links to the correct landing page. Nothing defeats brand building efforts on the Internet like substandard quality, dead links and non functioning website applications.

### Once you've created your banner ads, follow these hints for placement.

- Spend time locating the websites where your banner ads will stand out and be most relevant. Smaller sites, with fewer ads but frequented by visitors with a strong interest in a related product or service are good choices. These placements usually cost less, saving you money.
- Don't avoid websites where text ads dominate – use them to make your banner stand out even more.
- Be sure that your ads are placed on the correct page within a website – the wrong placement risks losing relevance.
- If you don't have the time to research websites to find the best placement, hire someone, if you can. If you are a small business with a limited budget, focus your cash allotment on placement. A clear, simple and professional design will suffice, for branding purposes your logo can suffice – it is more important initially to be strategically placed and get noticed. You can add flash as your business grows.

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- Lower costs by arranging for banner exchanges with complementary online businesses. Other placement options include banner networks that will handle placement for you or affiliate networks that charge on the basis of a completed user action that is specified in the network policy. You can earn extra cash to cover marketing expenses by selling ad space on your website or creating an affiliate network of your own.

Follow this formula and your business will benefit from a powerful brand building strategy using cost effective banner ads.

## Creative Networking and Brand Building with Business Cards

Business cards are a readily available, low cost way of promoting your business and developing and expanding your network of customers and professional colleagues. They introduce your brand to people around the world, or your city, increase the brand recognition of your business. Be creative in developing a plan for creative use of your business cards and you'll increase traffic to your website, sales, profit and the reach of your business network with a small investment of time and money.

First of all, inventory your current supply of business cards. Are they packed away in a box or gathering dust in a corner? How many do you have? Are you happy with the design? Is all of your contact information on the card – is it correct and up to date? Does the card bear your company logo?

Do whatever you need to do to stock up on a healthy supply of business cards. Be sure that the design is uniform in comparison to your other branding materials to boost brand recognition. Beyond that – here are some other ideas to help you get the most from this often overlooked advertising/branding/sales tool within the business world and your community.

- Add value to your business cards on the next reprint, or print a special batch with a value added offer on the back. Include a discount offer, special coupon, admission to an event, punch card device or another premium benefit. Give it some thought and customize a promotion that fits your business, and be sure to set a deadline for use.

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- Use your cards to drive traffic to your website – not merely by listing your URL. Add a line or two of text that gives users a reason to visit your site---the promise of coupons or a special offer or the impending arrival of a new product.
- Differentiate your business by including a creative tagline or single sentence that performs like a tiny ad publicizing a truly unique product, service or attribute of your business designed to generate or attract interest.
- Take the design of your current business card and expand its use to include promotional items such as pens, mugs, coasters, etc. Again, be creative in terms of matching the promotional gifts to your unique business purpose and in your methods of distribution.
- Include them in your mailings. Though many businesses have cut down the amount of paper sent through the postal services, there are still letters to send, bills to pay, promotional kits to deliver and packages to ship. And that's not even counting your personal mailings. Include a business card in every one of them.
- Give a business card with every customer receipt, place them in bags with merchandise, and put them in library books and books on the shelves in local bookstores – especially those that people interested in your business might pick up and read.
- Distribute business cards to the people you meet daily. Keep a supply on hand and visit other local businesses to find out if they will allow you to display your card in their shop or office.
- Place your cards in designated areas of shopping malls, supermarkets, waiting rooms, toll booths---any place where potential customers gather and spend time.
- Whenever you give a business card to a new acquaintance or colleague – give them an extra to pass on and widen your network even further.

Finally, carry your business cards everywhere you go. Have them printed up for your employees. Be sure everyone distributes them at meetings, conferences, conventions and trade shows. Remember that having a ready supply ensures that you can utilize any creative distribution opportunity that comes up at a moment's notice – and benefit from the results!

**“Business cards can introduce your brand to people around the world, or your city, and increase the brand recognition of your business”**

# Use Guerrilla Marketing Tactics to Make Your Small Business Perform Like a Giant

Guerrilla market concentrates on relationships. When small businesses devise creative ways to initiate and expand their networks of customer relationships, they often use guerrilla marketing tactics that can help even the playing field when it comes to competing with large, big budget companies that might seem far removed from the consumer and use traditional marketing techniques to promote their brands and products.

Guerrilla marketing strategies and tactics have evolved since Jay Conrad Levinson first introduced the concept in his 1984 book, *Guerrilla Marketing*. Small businesses have drawn inspiration and courage to break with the rules of tradition and take their companies to levels of success that they'd never before expected.

How can you spot a guerrilla tactic in action? Here are some characteristics to look for:

- A small financial investment requirement; but a substantial output of time and effort
- It contains the element of surprise
- It is designed to generate a high profit
- It focuses exclusively on ONE particular product or service
- It often results from the collaboration of two or more businesses with similar objectives.
- It takes smart advantage of technological advances to reach an audience and increase profits.

Basically, any marketing tactic that breaks traditional marketing rules or combines them in a nontraditional way can be considered guerrilla. Here are a few general tactics that you might consider when planning a guerrilla marketing strategy for your small business:

**Alternative Marketing** tactics – distribute flyers publicizing your business or special event in strategic places such as parking lots of places where people gather, ask grocers to stuff them into patron’s bags, place them in community newspapers or newsletters, all company mailings and place them in places with waiting areas such as beauty salons and professional offices.

**Grassroots Marketing** tactics expand your sales force and create a roster of brand ambassadors that help spread the word about your products and services. One way to do this is to create a free event that provides a benefit (free samples, promo gifts, introductory services) that inspires the ‘ambassadors’ who attend to pass on the good word about your brand.

**Viral Marketing** tactics –require intelligent use of technology that has already been created. A low investment product such as an e-book, computer game, or innovative ad that delivers your company message or features your products can spread the news about your business as quickly as the name suggests, especially when you take advantage of the power of social networking. Once again, investment is low, but effort may be intensive as you identify your target market and prepare the perfect medium for launch. The results can be intense, but don’t expect them to last for very long.

**Experiential Marketing** tactics seek to create an emotional connection with your target group of consumers. Perhaps the most common use of this guerilla tactic is to give out product samples at a gathering of a large group that represents your target audience. Companies that give free samples or demonstrations of cosmetics at teen oriented concerts, or offer free technique lessons at craft fairs, are some of the most common examples. Consumers meet your ambassadors, try

## Brand Your Way To Success

your products and discuss them with other attendees, forming an emotional relationship with staying (and purchasing) power.

Of course, the types of tactics that you choose and implement will depend on the type of products or services that you sell, where and how you sell them, your budget and your level of technological expertise. But virtually every business can find a creative way to use guerrilla marketing tactics to generate positive results.

# **Join the Network! Using Social Websites to Build a Powerful Brand**

Social networking websites are a natural tool for small businesses that have not yet reached their goals of building an easily recognized and respected brand. Users invest their time and attention in sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter with one obvious purpose – to elevate their profile – and the site owners focus on providing users with all of the support and tools they need to get noticed in the online community.

Social network success takes time and effort, from account setup through building a following and nurturing online relationships to the point where discussing your business and its offerings becomes a comfortable and natural next step. If you have a few hours to spare on a regular basis, you can make real progress using social networking technology to build your brand and raise your reputation above that of the competition.

Log onto social websites and use them to:

- Build anticipation ahead of the release of a new product and publicize its addition to your current line.
- Create a stir about your business among members of a social networking community.
- Gather feedback from other users about your business as well as opinion about special issues that affect it.

Social Networking sites create an interconnected web of users who pass along information and opinion within their websites and between them, as most users who use accounts on one site are

set up on several. Blog sites (Blogger, WordPress), mini blogs such as Twitter, personal sites like Facebook and My Space, media sharing sites (YouTube) and bookmark sharing sites like StumbleUpon and Digg each do their part to create a complete online presence.

Here are some ways to make use of this vast marketing potential to the benefit of your own business.

- Use blogs to create your own information and opinion center on the web. Create your own, post on others and establish a reputation while getting to know your buying public personally. In addition, blogs offer great SEO benefits and are the foundation of many social networking activities.
- Use Facebook, MySpace, etc. to locate potential customers by using search features that allow you to separate users by location, interests and preferences.
- Tout your own achievements by creating online profiles that list your awards, achievements and hard earned credentials.
- Connect with colleagues to exchange info and advice on professional networking sites such as LinkedIn.
- Send potential customers to your website using link strategies. Bookmarking sites are especially friendly to this task, especially if your website hosts a knowledge base or article directory.
- Use microblogs like Twitter to build a following of users based on common interests. Real time conversational features allow access to users who are willing to connect to you and form conversational relationships that can help promote your business.

Social networking website accounts are mostly free, at least during the setup stage. When you are ready to make use of advanced services, you may need to make a small investment. Take your time, try them out and do a lot of reading at first to get to know how things work and get a feel for the style of communication.

Perhaps most importantly, don't be too aggressive in the promotion of your business, especially not at first. You might make enemies, or even get banned from the site.

Careful understanding and regular use of Social Networking expand the horizons of your small business and provide low cost methods of developing your business brand and building an online reputation as an industry expert – bringing in more business and greater profits.

**“You can make real progress using social networking technology to build your brand and raise your reputation above that of the competition.”**

## “Building a Buzz” with Word of Mouth Marketing

Before technology changed the way we do business forever, Word of Mouth marketing was limited to local communication – usually verbal, telephone or over the fence conversations – or written correspondence. Today, Word of Mouth marketing describes a larger group of marketing techniques that includes buzz, viral and social media marketing. Businesses can choose from a wide range of tools designed to foster and spread a positive customer referral to potential customers nearly anywhere in the world.

Here are some basic ways to use word of mouth techniques to grow your business and build your brand:

- Find the online communities that will be most receptive to receiving information and forming positive opinions of your products or services. Create an article or write a blog posting and join. See if you can't get a discussion started.
- Pinpoint the heavyweights on each network that is closely relevant to your business. You'll recognize them as the members with the largest group of connections. Get to know them and gain their trust, you'll want their help in spreading the word about your business.
- Seek out industry recommendations and use them to bolster your reputation. Funnel their recommendations into a small niche community and let the buzz grow accordingly.
- Recruit interested parties and offer them free product or service to use and then post about online within the context of their social connections. This technique works well offline as well as online.

## Brand Your Way To Success

- Seek out consumer opinion forums and post on them. Start the conversation and learn from the responding posts.
- Expand your sales force using friends, family or even employees to post in online forums and at other strategic points on the web.
- If your business operates a website and you are not making use of email – get started now! Create an email newsletter and send it to all of your satisfied clients, who can then pass it on to others. Offer sign up to web visitors and grow a contact list, many of which are social networking, increasing your reach exponentially.
- Be sure that all of your web pages have some variation of a Tell a Friend feature that can be used to pass on the news about your business.
- Add an online chat to your website to facilitate discussion and add SEO power.

Finally, you may discover that it pays to keep a loose leash on your word of mouth marketing program. Don't exert too much control over its spread or your strategy may backfire. If your business provides quality products and services and you introduce yourself and your business to the appropriate consumer communities, all you need to do is initiate the conversation and watch your brand and sales grow, because the buzz will grow, and as always, 'people will talk'.

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# Your Logo: Key to a Vital Corporate Identity

Your company logo is a visual representation of your business brand. It is an expression of your vision, purpose, appeal and degree of professionalism. It takes stock of all of these essential qualities of your company and synthesizes them into one recognizable graphic image.

Once developed, designed and reproduced, your logo becomes the face of your company in your particular industry and in the marketplace at large. Closely associated with your business name, your logo appears on all of your advertising material, electronic correspondence, packaging and letterhead. It shows up on the pages of your website, on brochures and online ads posted all across the internet and visible to potential customers all around the world. Depending upon your type of business, you may even place it on promotional products– from mugs, caps and tee shirts, to billboards and bumper stickers.

Your logo is perhaps the most visible, vital and enduring part of your business, and should be planned and designed with care. Once you make your choice, and have been using it for any length of time, changes become very difficult, as you risk confusing the client base that has become accustomed to seeing it.

At first sight, your logo triggers a perception of your business in the minds and emotions of your audience. It doesn't explain every detail of your company (what you sell, the quality of your service, who you are and where you are located) to the potential customer with one glance, nor should you expect it to. The central purpose of your business logo is to draw attention and build a certain level of recognition among the people that make up your target audience as well as those who operate in the world of commerce, generally. Your logo should work to draw attention away from your competition and create the interest needed to propel your company to a premier place in your industry.

People view your logo in the small increments of time, so the combination of symbol, text and color you select needs to express the essential characteristics of your business in a memorable way. The greater and more positive an impression it leaves in the minds of the public, the faster you'll be on your way to establishing a positive, authentic and recognizable brand for your company.

Your logo is made up of a variety of elements, mainly:

**Text** – Your company name displayed in a stylish, clear and professional looking format

**Graphic** – A carefully chosen and specifically designed symbol or icon that sums up the essential qualities of your business and conveys its unique strengths.

**Color** – the unifying design mechanism that ties your logo to the rest of your company image and evokes an emotional response from viewers.

When combined, these elements (and various others, again depending on your type of business) help to establish your brand identity stylishly, professionally and hopefully, powerfully. The perfect combination will make a positive first impression, elicit a feeling of trust and satisfaction as customers search for your brand as they shop, and inspire an attitude of respect and trust among other professionals in your industry.

Remember that your logo is just one facet of your brand building strategy – don't expect it to be the entire campaign – but when it's well designed and circulated, you'll see that it's a crucial part of your overall business success.

# Avoid these Design Mistakes for a Picture Perfect Logo

Designing your business logo involves a careful process of research, planning, experimentation and choice. However you decide to approach it, you'll need to invest time, money and other resources to come up with the winning combination of text, font style, color and graphic images.

You can design your logo on your own, hire a professional design agency or use an auction site, where designers will submit their suggestions and then you select the best sample. Once you've chosen the design professional that you wish to work with, you should continue to work on your logo until the design is perfected. Remember that your business is going to have to live with your choice of logo for a long time, so you should plan and design it with this thought in mind. Some business mistakes are less permanent – choosing a bad store location or making a hiring mistake can be rectified by moving or termination – changing a logo due to a design flaw after customers have come to recognize it is a bit more complicated and confusing.

Here are some common mistakes that business owners make in the process of producing a logo for their companies. Do your best to avoid them and you'll be on your way to creating a strong and attractive logo:

- ***Don't rush.*** Take some time to flesh out a full description of your business and to develop a truly unique design that is both attractive and expressive of the fundamental qualities of your business. Enjoy every step of the creative process and your end result will be much more appealing.
- ***Stay away from a complicated or exotic design*** – for a number of very good reasons. Simple beats ornamental in terms of attractiveness, ease of recognition and recall for your

audience. A simple design also transfers more smoothly and easily between various kinds of media – from printed pieces of to web graphics with minimal cost and hassle. You'll also avoid problems related to size issues, particularly useful if you intend to resize your logo, for example, from the size on your letterhead to a large and visible logo to display on promotional T-shirts.

- ***Don't ignore design parameters such as your logo's footprint and aspect ratio.*** Design elements that fall outside the sphere of your central design can distort your logo's footprint and cause various problems throughout the reproduction process. Try to keep the design balanced and self contained, and keep your length, width and height dimensions as uniform as you can.
- ***Avoid using an obscure font for the text portion of your logo.*** It is critically important that your company name be instantly recognizable – be sure you don't lose sight of this principal in an effort to be stylish. Keep fonts simple, avoid italics and stay with sans serif styles for the most part.
- ***Be original!*** Don't copy your competition and risk obscurity by designing a logo that looks too much like that of another business, especially one that operates in a similar sector or nearby location. One of the purposes of your logo is to differentiate your business, to get it noticed, and you won't achieve this objective if your design blends in or becomes confused with another.

Be aware, learn as much as you can and avoid these common mistakes and you'll develop a unique, easily recognizable and memorable logo that places an attractive stamp on your brand building and business identification efforts.

# Color Your Logo for Maximum Attractiveness

The perfect logo design for your business should achieve your goals for brand recognition, whether it appears in black and white or in color. Flexibility of design, especially when it comes to color, guarantees attractiveness regardless of the presentation.

For specific advertising purposes, the colors that you choose for your logo are important because their shade, intensity, and fit with your specific type of business will determine the effectiveness of your graphic representation. Your choices should enhance your brand recognition power by matching your business and blending with selected icon and font to create a single, cohesive image.

Keep these points in mind when selecting colors to incorporate in the design of your company logo:

-- Match the colors with your unique business characteristics. For example:

- consider neutral shades for a relaxed, yet professional business purpose, for example, a medical office, legal services provider or accountancy business.

- warm colors, such as reds, yellows and oranges are great for attracting attention and provide a welcoming ambiance and for the hospitality and restaurant fields. They also project energy helpful to sellers of children's toys, furnishings and clothing, especially when used with simple primary shades.

- feminine shades of pink, purple, pale green and blue enhance recognition for products being marketed to women, such as fashions, accessories, cosmetics and jewelry.

-smart, slick contrasting colors such as black, silver and white work together to create a brisk business image that indicates efficiency and competence, particularly helpful for a business involved in sales, real estate or public service.

-the use of patriotic colors in company logos indicates dedication and trustworthiness. They are usually used to create logo art for government agencies or businesses that market products associated with a patriotic purpose or celebration, such as flags, uniforms, souvenirs and promotional materials.

-- Be aware of the level of saturation used in your logo design, the colors should complement the text and icons without overwhelming them or obstructing them from instant recognition.

--Don't expect the colors used in the computerized version of your design to look exactly the same when reproduced in printed form. Some colors do not transfer to equivalent ink tones. If you are working on your own and have limited design experience, you should probably consult a professional with regard to this field.

--Consider your logo colors in light of your entire business color scheme. Letterhead, collateral promotional materials, your website design, physical store (if you operate one) and your packaging should coordinate to project an image of efficient cohesiveness, adding to the professionalism of your corporate image. It might not be necessary to make everything match, but avoid clashes at all costs.

Choose and apply your logo colors carefully and the result will be a logo that attracts the right customers to your business for all the best reasons.

# Your Best Business Logo: Recipe for Success

You want your new business logo to have as professional an appearance as possible and to function as an effective representation of your company. Making these design principles a part of your logo creation process will help you to emerge with a final product that will make your business proud and profitable for decades to come.

**Principle #1** – Choose simple over complicated when it comes to both color and design. Even if your business is centered on an artistic or decorative product or pursuit, you need not overdo this in your logo. Overly elaborate designs might make pretty page art, but can actually hurt your business by failing to leave a quick, accurate and lasting impression on your viewing audience.

Consider the popular logos that you see every day, in fact, spend a few days noticing them as you go about your life as usual—driving, reading newspapers and magazines, viewing television and websites for recreational purposes. When you see a logo that really reaches out and grabs your attention, write it down. Keep going until you've got a list. When you review them, you'll probably notice that they share a simple but attractive design with a splash of color and ability to stay in your memory.

**Principle #2** – Continue the simplicity trend when choosing the text for your logo. Pick a font that is familiar to the eye and very easily readable. Again, examine your list of everyday logos from Principle #1 and you'll see that the best fonts are clear and simple, with open spaced characters, usually of san serif variety. Avoid italics; they are notoriously difficult to read, especially in small font sizes. Popular choices include Arial and Verdana.

**Principle #3** – Express Yourself! Think of your logo as your company's graphic signature, in a world where clashing and competing graphics make up a huge part of the everyday visual life of

consumers (you've likely experienced this phenomenon while compiling your list of favorites); the last thing that you want is a disconnected logo that confuses your audience. You need to build into your logo a close relationship between the essential nature of your business and the design that introduces your company to the world. Again, examine the logos you see every day and you'll see how they relate to the purpose, mission and 'personality' of your company. If they do not, you'll see a real life example of why it's so important to follow Principle #3 as closely as possible.

### **Principle #4** Leave an Impression

How big is your company's advertising budget? Chances are, if it is new, you have little to spare. Make your resources go further by devising a logo that begs a second look from your target audience and increases the level of recognition with every view. To accomplish this goal, you'll need an original design that clearly stands out from the rest of the pack. This is not as difficult as it might seem – it requires thought, time and planning along with reliance on established design rules and a clear understanding of your country's purpose and its vision for the future.

**Your company logo is a visual representation of your business brand. It is an expression of your vision, purpose, appeal and degree of professionalism**

# Logo Design: Use it to Your Business Advantage

Even if you've included a well designed logo in your overall branding and promotion strategy, you've probably already listened to plenty of conflicting opinions concerning the importance of a logo to the overall success of your company. These opinions, some from experienced business people, have probably left you wondering – *how much of my precious resources do you really need to commit to logo design?*

When considered as just one pillar of your overall branding and marketing strategy, your logo's value is negligible, but when combined with other elements, it can lift your company to a level of success head and shoulders above your competition.

How can you harness the power of a great logo and use it to build your brand and enhance your business recognition? Here are some visible ways that your logo supports and advance your business, all with the aim of establishing a profitable and enduring enterprise:

- **A good logo will increase the power of your advertising dollar.** Well designed and memorable – it will stretch your resources by taking fewer views to make a lasting impression on your target audience. This aspect is particularly important if your ad budget is small.
- **Your logo presents your business name with the power of a graphic form.** For this reason, you need to be sure that you're comfortable with the design and that it is a valid and authentic representation of your business image and vision. Graphics naturally draw attention to text, and style attracts interest so that viewers want to examine the substance of the business itself. Your logo supplies enormous power in establishing your business as truly professional and trustworthy, and gives you the advantage over a business without one, or with one of inferior quality.

## Effective Logo Design

- **Your logo projects your business image industry wide.** Suppliers, customers, competitors in your field will get their first impression of your business from your logo – make it as positive as possible. A clean, professional, memorable graphic presentation gives them confidence that they are dealing with a high caliber business that cares about its reputation and plans to remain an industry player for years to come.
- **Your logo attracts customers.** It plays a vital role in establishing brand identity and brings new customers into the fold while it welcomes returning customers who associate it with a positive previous customer experience. Think of it as your sign post on a highway crowded with competing businesses. In addition to bringing in new customers, it will bring in repeat business based on the level of satisfaction that people remember and associate with the visual image of your logo.
- **Your logo is especially important if you do business online.** The online marketplace is a virtual cornucopia of design and color, sounds and images, all competing for attention and ultimately, for profit. Creating and utilizing a logo that stands out from the competition and helps to convey an image of excellence and trustworthiness contributes greatly to both your business image and your bottom line.

Choosing a logo may not be the most important decision you'll make in the initial stages of your business, but it is one that will follow you through the years to come. Wise decisions will go a long way toward creating a powerful logo as well as a powerful and profitable business.

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