

Ten Branding Musts

Branding is not just your logo or tagline or the "look" and "feel" of your marketing communications. Branding is the sum total of your customer's experiences and perceptions of your products, services, and employees. In actuality, your brand is what everyone else thinks your company and product are - it's what people say about your company behind your back.

A branding strategy is the beginning of all customer contact behavior. When the budget allows, the branding strategy can become the basis for better advertising communications such as multi-media advertising, direct mail, trade shows, and expanded public relations.

The undertaking of branding may seem scary; however there is strong proof that branding is worth the effort. Listed here are some benefits of a strong brand.

- *Branding is what gives your company value and separates you from your competitors.

- *Enhanced perceived value allows for top pricing and shelters you from price competition.

- *Branding will provide protection in times of negative press.

- *A strong brand enables you to launch new products and services more quickly and cost effectively.

Your brand will come to pass with or without your effort. Branding and managing a brand is tough work. Here are some no-nonsense guidelines on how to get started.

- *To succeed, you'll need to get everyone involved from top management on down.

- *Research the successful competitors. Study their communications and how they position themselves.

- *Study what values are most significant to customers. Develop a questionnaire and interview key customers and prospects.

- *Develop a strategy from the information you gathered. It must be achievable and differentiating.

- *Leverage brand strategy by integrating marketing communications. Check for consistency of all communications from every department. Sending a cohesive message will build brand equity.

- *Evaluate and measure performance. Make changes as needed but be patient.