

Got Branding?

by David Shafer (a.k.a. Your Logo Guy)

Moments before I awoke one morning, I was in the midst of a bizarre daydream/nightmare. In this “dream” I was a cow waiting in line to be burnt with a hot iron. Cowpokes were catching us on the backside with a “brand” to clearly identify us. I woke up seconds before my hide got scorched, thankful it was a dream and aware that I was being taught a valuable lesson -- we small business owners are attacking the market every day, exposing our products and services, creating some sort of “brand” identity. What is that brand? When someone meets your brand, will they remember it tomorrow? If so, would it be favorable? What is this thing called branding, anyway, and why is it so important?

Branding is more than a title or a concept. It’s very real, but it can be difficult to define. Some marketers define a company’s brand as their promise (think of the Honda brand – what is the “promise” you perceive with that brand? Dependability? Integrity? Reliability?) But branding goes beyond expectations and perceived promises to the actual experience customers have with a company and what they associate with that company’s name. Go to a Starbucks and experience the energy of peace and warmth, the smell, the products.... The brand that is Starbucks is felt when you hear the name spoken from someone’s lips.

What is your brand? What is felt by your clients when they think of your company’s name? Are they going to be willing to refer their friends to you because your brand (their perception and their experience) is appealing? Are you just another realtor from so and so or are you “John The Amazing Home Transaction Specialist”?

The importance of branding is realized when you step out of your store front and see the thousands of other realtors, financial consultants and business owners out there. You may think to yourself, “With so much competition, how will people decide to use my product or service and not others?” Effective branding efforts (and delivering on that brand!) are key to your success.

The first step in developing a brand is to decide on and develop the “promise” you want to deliver to your customers. Then, develop a “look,” “culture” and “feel” that matches this promise and is uniquely yours. To get started, answer the following questions:

- Who is your target market?
- What is the promise I want to portray and deliver to my customers? Affordability? Integrity? Luxury? Creativity? Dependability? Convenience?
- What kind of “look” will effectively communicate this promise? This is where your logo, marketing materials, website, uniforms, company colors, store design, etc. will come into play.

- What kind of company culture and customer experience will communicate and continue to reinforce your brand?
- What are the top 3 barriers or obstacles your company must overcome with your target market to get a “sale”?

With these answers you can begin to see what direction you should take to develop a solid brand – not with a branding iron, but by burning a clear, positive identity in the minds of your prospects and customers. An identity that will turn into increased (and repeat) business for you.

Bio

David Shafer, president of Your Logo Guy, partners with clients to develop an effective brand and specializes in creating the right "look" for your business. David knows that good design is about more than just art and creativity. It's about growing your business and delivering the right visual message - on time, on budget. Contact David at 817-235-5892, david@yourlogoguy.com or visit www.YourLogoGuy.com