

## How to improve your brand

### Don't leave the marketing of your business to chance!

Making your Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) stand out from the crowd is critical in today's fast paced and competitive business world. Therefore, as a SME you need to be diligent, committed and critically focused on what you stand for.

Most business people I meet and talk to, tend to think that branding is basically aligned to their name, logo, slogan and the style they adopt throughout their business promotions. Yes, this is a catalyst that helps create an image of your business, but there is more to branding than that.

This article will provide the necessary knowledge and understanding of what branding is and its characteristics and dimensions. I will also provide some strategy tips to ensure your SME differentiates and develops and portrays a stronger branding message.

#### 'what is a brand' ?

The word brand or branding is often mis-understood amongst the business community. In short, a brand is a business to business (B2B) relationship and specific to that relationship is the word, 'trust'. The ultimate success or failure of your business is based on the total experience and relationship a customer has with you. In short, a **'positive emotion needs to pre-dominate'**.

The sighting of your visual presence through a logo, snappy slogans or colorful packaging, is a start. Your SME needs to build your brand through your actions, beliefs and abilities and to ensure that your consumers see you portray them.

#### brand power

My research shows that brands have tremendous power. Customers are willing to pay up to an average of 10% more for a brand they know and trust. What do you think of when you want to buy a product or engage a service? Chances are you consider the trust factor, reliability, previous experiences, or customer service.

#### brand characteristics

Successful SME's understand that a brand needs to be clearly defined and its customers need to clearly grasp what its brand stands for. The key components of a brand are as follows:

- **your distinction:** *there is a point of view being expressed by the SME*
- **your relevance:** *there is a connection with consumer opinion or a synergy exists*
- **your consistency:** *the consumer experiences or observes what you say or portray*

#### brand dimensions

My research shows that credibility and trust and value in the customers mind revolves around three main dimensions. These are as follows:

- **your relationships:** *how you interact with others*
- **your performance:** *how you do it or perform to a certain standard*
- **your style:** *how as an individual you relate to others*

## Top ten tips for 'building your brand'

The essential marketing principles and the value of a brand must not be underestimated. A brand for your business still continues to mediate how the consumer feels about your business, not to mention their desire to continue doing business with you.

### 1 **have a 'simple but catchy' business name**

follow the Keep it Simple Stupid (KISS) philosophy. If you are a new start up or a SME, having the right name is of utmost importance. In short, it conveys the information about what you do and it should try to gain the emotional connection you are trying to achieve. 'Jim's Mowing' is an interesting name that says it all, in my opinion

### 2. **take advantage of having a unique logo**

the development and portrayal of a logo lends weight to your business name and adds value to your brand. If done correctly, logos distinguish you from the crowd, and can enhance credibility and portray professionalism for your SME to your prospects.

### 3. **be authentic and look inside**

you need to look also on the inside. In other words, what drives and inspires you?. What are your values? B2B becomes much easier and more harmonious if your values align with your consumers. Trust can be built faster, if your business values are authentic and your brand reflects these values.

### 4. **gather research feedback about your SME**

continually, research your competitors or other successful SME's. Analyse what they are doing to ensure effective customer service and how they are improving their brand value and exposure. Mistakes cost money, but you need to be 'smart' and adopt the 'however long it takes attitude' to get your branding right. It's well worth the time investment. Keep ahead of the pack!

### 5. **discover the art of smart advertising**

the key to success of any business lies in the strength and depth of its brand. SME's need to consider visual presence via, e-marketing, and in specific, website design & development. This strategy works 24/7 and costs benefits are huge, in comparison to traditional advertising. Similarly, article marketing is cost effective. Write and advertorial about your SME and place it in your local community news or internet directories or portals.

### 6. **be a proficient networker**

gather Word of Mouth (WOM) referrals, attend association meetings relevant to your SME's location or business services to develop and harness B2B relationship. Do something for someone, barter your services as this helps build you profile and attend seminars and cross reference your business cards. Develop a ten second elevator pitch describing who you are and what you do. People know people and your face matters.

**7. 'self' improvement training**

continually improve your self-image. Although, it is important to dress and 'walk the talk' accordingly, SME owners need to consider laying a foundation for continuous learning for themselves and their staff. Dress code, the way you speak, and how you listen, cannot be underestimated, especially if you require repeat business. First impressions count!

**8. enhance your aptitude and attitude**

the old adage about attitude, aptitude and attributes still exists today and even more so, when SME's are finding it tough. Put simply, be courteous, be polite, be on time, be reliable, pay attention and show enthusiasm and guide people with your knowledge, skills and abilities and your brand will grow. Customers need to see your actions not your intentions!

**9. differentiate with a slogan and stick by it**

take advantage of developing a slogan for your SME. My research highlights that putting a slogan to accompany your business name title you will increase the likelihood of someone remembering you and potentially engaging you. It gives consumers a main reason as to why they should want to contact you.

**10. pay attention and listen to what consumers are saying**

measuring your brand and strengthening it, is of utmost importance. You need regular feedback as to whether you are being distinctive, relevant and consistent. Adopt the 'Ask Around' philosophy, gain perspectives and opinion from friends, family and fellow business colleagues. It costs nothing, but you need to 'actively listen' to what they are saying

**Remember me? I'm just the customer**

No matter what advancements in technology are appearing there is always a basic underlying principle that will never change. Developing sales and creating loyalty from consumers is based on quality of delivery, trust and them knowing about and experiencing you, the business owner.

Consumers adopt the 'what's in it for me' philosophy. So ask them what they want and give it to them, with a bit more, its not rocket science. Smile!