

Branding You

Summary Checklist

Introduction: What's in a Brand?

- ✓ Your brand defines who you are and sets you apart
- ✓ It emphasizes the unique value that you offer your customers
- ✓ Your brand is communicated through everything your company does

Who is Your Company?

- ✓ You have to see how your company is viewed by the public
- ✓ Who do they see you as?
- ✓ What are your values as they perceive them?

- ✓ It's useful to think in terms of personal characteristics
- ✓ Just like a person, a company can be strong, or gentle for example
- ✓ If your company were a person, who would it be?

Know Your Customers

- ✓ The most important part of your brand is getting to know your customers
- ✓ Brands aren't objective
- ✓ You need to get inside their heads to understand how they think or feel

- ✓ Understand the demographic you cater to
- ✓ Understand psychological factors such as how they think about money
- ✓ Know their buying habits

Consistency is Key

- ✓ The public should get the same message every time they come in contact with you
- ✓ It's especially important online where there are more touch points
- ✓ Consistency is key across all media

- ✓ Your brand should also provide a seamless user experience
- ✓ This should be in harmony with the image your brand projects
- ✓ Apple is a good example of this

All in the Mind

- ✓ Always remember your brand is in your customers' mind
- ✓ It's not necessarily something about your company
- ✓ Aim to make associations in people's minds with your company

Strategies for Marketing Your Brand

- ✓ The keys to marketing a brand are consistency and making an emotional connection
- ✓ You need to deliver the same message to encourage trust
- ✓ The emotional connection includes associations your brand makes in a customer's mind

- ✓ Establish a connection by solving a specific problem your customer faces
- ✓ It's impossible to solve *all* of their problems
- ✓ Focus on one problem no one else solves like you do

Integrating Your Brand Strategy

- ✓ You should send a clear message online and offline to integrate all marketing channels
- ✓ A good strategy is interactive and engages the customer
- ✓ Today people go out and find their own sources of news and information

- ✓ Engage your customers wherever they're looking for information
- ✓ Establish a presence on social media, engage with your website, etc
- ✓ Create as many touch points as possible with your audience

- ✓ All channels need to be integrated so they create a web that sends people back and forth
- ✓ At every touch point, send customers to all of your other marketing channels

- ✓ All of this should be backed with strong SEO
- ✓ People may lose track of your name
- ✓ Target keywords well so that your website or profile will come up in a search

- ✓ You need a real person to respond to comments on social media
- ✓ Automating social media can cause harm

- ✓ You also need to track analytics to improve your strategy

Attitude Branding

- ✓ Marketing a larger feeling that's associated in the minds of your customers about your business
- ✓ This feeling isn't necessarily associated with your products or services
- ✓ It's all about a particular feeling, lifestyle or personal identity
- ✓ Your brand contributes to the consumer's sense of identity and self-expression

No-Brand Marketing

- ✓ The brand is made conspicuous through the absence of a brand name
- ✓ Even though it may sound counterintuitive, the results can be lucrative
- ✓ Save money on advertising and appeal to the segment of the market that doesn't care about a brand name

Word of Mouth

- ✓ Focus on recommendations
- ✓ Word of mouth is the most powerful form of marketing
- ✓ It's not coming from the company, but from a friend

Name is Everything

- ✓ The most powerful aspect of a brand is its name
- ✓ It conveys a great deal of information
- ✓ Nonsense words are easy to brand as you'll become the only association with it

Be Flexible and Stay Current

- ✓ Your branding strategy should be flexible
- ✓ Things are always in constant flux
- ✓ You need to listen to your market and its tastes to stay relevant to them

Choosing Which Branding Strategies to Use

- ✓ Always start with considering your audience and target market

- ✓ The aim of brand marketing is to create an impression in their minds
- ✓ Conduct market research to discover how the people in your market see themselves and the brand they buy

Marketing Mix Strategy

- ✓ Marketing mix means planning your entire brand marketing strategy from start to finish
- ✓ It considers every step along the way
- ✓ Your marketing mix is broken down into 4 Ps:
 - Product
 - Pricing
 - Positioning
 - Promotion
- ✓ Positioning is perhaps the least understood
- ✓ It means how a product is sold
- ✓ How products are packaged and where they're sold are important considerations

Corporate vs. Distinct Branding

- ✓ Determine whether you should focus on corporate branding or distinct product branding
- ✓ Corporate branding – your company is your brand
- ✓ Distinct branding – Products or product lines are individual brands
- ✓ Some companies employ a bit of both styles
- ✓ Automakers are a good example of this

Branding on Social Media

- ✓ No matter what strategy you employ, it's a given it will involve social media
- ✓ You need to find the right platform
- ✓ Find which will best communicate your brand and accomplish branding goals
- ✓ Each site offers different capabilities
- ✓ Some are better suited for certain goals
- ✓ Define your purpose for your social media branding first, then choose the right platform
- ✓ Go where your audience is
- ✓ Consider demographics and where your customers socialize online

- ✓ Consider the number of users – Facebook is the most popular platform

Vision, Values and Story

- ✓ Consider the three pillars to every good brand
 - Vision
 - Where you want your brand to be in the future
 - Values
 - Core principles that never change and are non-negotiable
 - Story
 - Why and how your brand came to be

Who Will Manage Your Brand?

- ✓ For every brand, someone has to serve as the brand manager
- ✓ It's hard to define the role as there are so many different tasks
- ✓ They oversee everything related to the brand and take responsibility for its success and failure

- ✓ A good brand manager takes ownership of the brand
- ✓ They become a resource for all things branding
- ✓ They need to know it through and through and understand all related aspects

- ✓ They need a strong vision for the brand and develop strategies for advancement
- ✓ They must be able to stay on track working towards a vision
- ✓ One role is to constantly come up with ideas for furthering the brand

- ✓ Brand managers operate on instinct
- ✓ There is no textbook or true or tried methods since all brands are different
- ✓ They need to know how to follow their gut and make spontaneous decisions

- ✓ Communication is one of the most important skills
- ✓ They need to collaborate and work well with different teams
- ✓ They also need to work well under pressure

Online Brand Management

- ✓ It takes a great deal of effort to maintain an online presence
- ✓ The branding benefits are well worth it
- ✓ You need to know how to use the internet to leverage exposure

The Importance of SEO

- ✓ Make sure your website and social media profiles come up in searches related to the brand
- ✓ People will check Google to see what they can find out about you
- ✓ Put a proactive SEO strategy in place

Email is Still Number One

- ✓ Email is still the main mode of communication
- ✓ It's good to build a list and market directly to members' inboxes
- ✓ The personal nature of email makes it excellent for creating an emotional bond

The World of Social Media

- ✓ Social media includes video sharing sites, blogs, online forums and more
- ✓ Join and leverage the power of sites like Yelp
- ✓ Encourage customers to leave good reviews and watch for and respond to bad ones

Content Marketing

- ✓ Regularly publish articles, blog posts and other content that helps your target market
- ✓ Gain exposure and communicate brand message

Online Reputation Management

- ✓ It's possible someone might say something bad about your brand online
- ✓ When a negative comment is posted, you need to handle it immediately
- ✓ Encourage good reviews and positive comments

- ✓ Always stay 'on-brand' when responding to negative comments
- ✓ Never get angry
- ✓ Give others who see the interactive the right brand message

Get Reviewed

- ✓ Seek to get reviewed wherever possible
- ✓ Form relationships with reviewers and encourage customers to leave reviews
- ✓ Word of mouth is the best branding you could hope for

Offline Brand Management

- ✓ We often let offline brand management fall to the wayside
- ✓ This is a big mistake
- ✓ It should be just as high a priority

Design Features

- ✓ Choose colors, fonts, placements, etc that are consistent with your brand image
- ✓ Manage design features carefully
- ✓ Control every aspect and provide materials

Your Employees are the Face of Your Brand

- ✓ Make sure employees understand the brand and their place in the story
- ✓ They'll be the face of the brand when they come into contact with customers
- ✓ You may choose one person as a brand representative

Wow Your Customers

- ✓ Good customer service and attention is often lacking today
- ✓ Go beyond the competition to wow them
- ✓ They'll tell others about you

Establish Offline Ambassadors

- ✓ Identify those who are your biggest supporters
- ✓ These are well-connected influencers who like to talk about your brand
- ✓ Cultivate a good relationship with them

Get Out and See People

- ✓ Make a habit of attending live events and other opportunities to meet customers
- ✓ The more you do this the more it will build your brand
- ✓ Many brands fail to do this

The Keys to Maintaining a Strong Brand

- ✓ Your brand is your biggest investment
- ✓ It takes a long time to establish and make it successful
- ✓ It's an ongoing challenge

- ✓ Always have goals for brand management
- ✓ Define these goals and create a plan for achieving them
- ✓ When one is reached, define the next and start working toward it

Protect Your Brand

- ✓ There are legal considerations such as trademarks and copyrights
- ✓ Protect from inconsistencies, improper positioning and misrepresentation

Explore Financial Opportunities

- ✓ Your brand engenders loyalty among your customers
- ✓ There are other ways you can reap rewards
- ✓ Multiply profits through licensing and franchising

Maintain Consistency

- ✓ You have to create standards and uphold them meticulously
- ✓ Draft guidelines and share them with anyone who may represent the brand
- ✓ You'll need them defined and explained for brand managers

- ✓ Include an overview of the brand with vision, philosophy, values and story
- ✓ The bulk of the guidelines should cover design features
- ✓ Also include what not to do, and include examples

- ✓ Create a set of guidelines for employees
- ✓ Everyone needs to be on the same page
- ✓ Put together a style guide or best practices for employees to follow

Branding is for Everyone

- ✓ Highlight the value of the brand to everyone involved
- ✓ Create a culture around your brand
- ✓ Remember it's a work in progress and you should always seek to improve it

Monitoring Your Brand

- ✓ Good brand management requires careful monitoring
- ✓ Set aside time each day for checking up on your brand's presence
- ✓ You may want to set aside more time weekly or monthly for more detailed analysis

Tools for Monitoring Your Brand

- ✓ There are many tools online for monitoring
- ✓ Some will send you a link when your brand is mentioned
- ✓ You can choose to see only positive or negative listings

Google Alerts

- ✓ Spend some time shopping around
- ✓ Sign up for Google Alerts in the meantime
- ✓ Select keywords or phrases and it will let you know when someone posts something about you

More Specialized Tools

- ✓ There are tools for specific social media sites
- ✓ There are also specific analytic tools designed to help you boost your search engine rankings

Unlinked Mentions

- ✓ You may also want to find unlinked mentions and link them back to your site
- ✓ It's a lost opportunity when someone mentions you and doesn't add a link
- ✓ Reach out to the site owner and they'll often be happy to add your link

Monitor Your Competition

- ✓ Sign up for alerts on your competition and monitor them
- ✓ This can help you come up with ideas for making your brand stronger or at least differentiating yourself from them
- ✓ Also find out what customers think of them

Quick Response

- ✓ Be proactive and respond quickly when there are issues with your brand online
- ✓ Respond to positive comments as well as negative ones
- ✓ Send positive reviewers a 'Thank You' email

Rebranding

- ✓ There often comes a time when a company needs to rebrand
- ✓ Maybe you've finally discovered who you are
- ✓ Perhaps your brand is no longer resonating with your market

- ✓ Rebranding could be as simple as making a small change to your logo or name
- ✓ Or it could be an attempt at reaching a while new market or a new message you want to convey
- ✓ However large or small, rebranding should always be taken seriously

Why Rebrand?

- ✓ Before you decide to rebrand, make sure it's absolutely necessary
- ✓ The best way to know if it's needed is to monitor sales
- ✓ If you're losing customers to your competition it's a sign your brand is no longer resonating with them

- ✓ Changing market trends often force brands to rebrand
- ✓ Market dilution is a reason many companies rebrand
- ✓ Your original target is no longer as narrow and specifically targeted

- ✓ Companies rebrand when they expand into new markets, merge with or are acquired by other companies
- ✓ You may rebrand to shift focus from negative to more positive aspects of your business
- ✓ There may be internal reasons such as employees no longer believe in the brand or vision

The Process of Rebranding

- ✓ Once you've decided to rebrand, declare it official and commit to it
- ✓ Draw up a plan and get everyone on board
- ✓ Create an in-depth plan detailing changes you'll make

- ✓ Rebranding starts with going back to basics
- ✓ Conduct market research and redefine your offering to meet customers' current needs
- ✓ Make customers once again the focus

- ✓ Consider hiring a branding consultant
- ✓ Failure can be catastrophic for a company
- ✓ A consultant can provide their experience to make sure your rebranding doesn't cost you

Rebranding Best Practices

- ✓ The changes to your brand should reflect the current market environment
- ✓ They should also reflect who you are now
- ✓ Stay true to who you are today

- ✓ Don't cling to the past
- ✓ What worked in the past won't work in the future
- ✓ Look at the current landscape and current market research to make your decisions

- ✓ Start with small changes and gradually move to bigger ones
- ✓ Be careful not to alienate current customers
- ✓ Tell your customers about changes before they go into effect

- ✓ Update all of your online and offline media to reflect your rebrand
- ✓ Don't forget to update your mobile site as well
- ✓ Pay close attention to analytics to monitor progress

Conclusion

- ✓ You should now have a good understanding of the basics of branding
- ✓ There's a great deal of work ahead
- ✓ Learn from brands you love, competitors and your customers