

Management Article-May 2008- How Do Your Customers See You? (part 1 of 2)

How you present your image is important to the subliminal imprint on your customers' memories. Have you got a logo for your firm? How about a standard color theme? If not, it's time to think about your business image and its overall symbol in the public mind.

Say you have a floral shop. Over time, you've learned to identify your primary customers and you've found they really like red roses. Then your logo should be a red rose. Go a step further; paint your floral shop the color of red roses. Hire a muralist to paint the front or side of your building to look like a red-rose garden.

Do you see what we're saying here? The consistency of your visual image becomes an imprint in the mind of your customer. You want that imprint to be elementary because simple images are easier to grasp and remember. A primary color, like red or yellow, files into human memory in such a way that it's easily recalled. Simple cues will call forth a graphic picture quite easily, and that's good for you and your business.

Your logo should be a reflection of your firm. Why are simple graphics used on highway signs? It's so that anyone can follow the directions regardless of their language. We all know to drive more cautiously when we see the warning sign indicating a deer crossing. We all know how a stop sign looks. These images are filed away in our subconscious memory to act as a simple, easily identified language. That's precisely what you want to achieve with a business logo, and precisely what you should achieve by implementing a company theme throughout all the visible areas that greet your customers coming and going.

It's part of an exercise called "branding". It's a business take-off on the western concept of branding a rancher's cattle and horses. In the Old West, it left no doubt about who owned what. It's given rise to our modern day use of logos to establish a simple-language image to help identify particular services or products with a particular business.

Start the process by simply asking yourself what makes your products or services better than those of any competitor, or what distinguishes your company.

Branding is making your product stand out from all the rest of the advertising noise we hear broadcast in a thousand ways every day or that we see plastered everywhere in print. If you're going to be seen, you've got to compete. If you're going to compete, you've got to stand out. The marketplace is noisy. To get business, you need to be not only noticed but remembered as well.

If you think what you're selling is a commodity and can't be branded, you're wrong. Milk is a commodity and look what Carnation has done with that. Bottled water is a commodity, but look what the entrepreneurs have done with that! Fuel is a commodity, but there are all kinds of brands promoting various attributes of additives. "Put a tiger in your tank," one advises. That's branding. You'll likely see a picture of a tiger on the building and recognize a color theme particular to that product. That's how the idea enters the public mind and why it stays there from one generation to the next.

Remember, only you can make BUSINESS GREAT!

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