



branding 101

The whole concept of branding is foreign to many small businesses and organizations. They view it as something that only matters in the ivory towers of global corporations.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Branding is important because not only is it what makes a **memorable impression** on consumers, but it allows your customers and visitors to know what to expect from your company/organization. It is a way of distinguishing yourself from the competitors and clarifying what it is you offer that makes you the better choice.

1. Repetition and consistency are paramount. Any parent knows that when you say something once it seldom sinks in. And, parents who send mixed messages confuse the child ... and perhaps themselves! The same dynamics apply to branding: the market needs to see the same *imagery* and the same *message* again and again and again.

2. Staff can undermine your consistency. Even in large organizations, staff members tend to develop their own way of talking about the business/organization they represent. However, if every staff person tells a different story, your customer base will ultimately have many different impressions of what your business does. Make sure everyone on your team is speaking in a consistent way about your organization.

3. Branding is more than just a logo. Every business should have a logo, but just as important are a consistent color scheme for the website and brochures, a strong tagline, and a consistent set of talking points for sales and marketing communication. Branding should dive deeper into the details still, in terms of consistent font styles, content and any other data and imagery customers see.

4. Branding is far more than window dressing. Far from it: Effective branding reflects and projects the *core values* and *key differentiators* of your business. A strong brand tells customers what you stand for and why they should buy from you and visit. Are you the most affordable? The best quality? The most reliable? The most innovative? Your imagery and messaging must get to the heart of what you do. If you are an attraction what is unique about what you offer?

5. Branding must be focused. Continuing on the previous point, you must confine your branding to a few critical concepts. No amount of branding expertise can communicate that you're the most affordable, best quality, most reliable *AND* the most innovative. The more you dilute your message, the harder it is to remember and the less important it sounds.

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