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Revealing the Roots: The Process of Building Brand

By Beth Brodovsky

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How is branding different than marketing?

Branding is not so much different from marketing as it is an element of marketing. We think of marketing as a tree; the brand is the roots, holding the tree in place and providing constant energy. The leaves are the tactics, reaching in various directions and changing with the seasons, the trunk is the marketing strategy, connecting the brand and the tactics. In this way, brand is positioned as the basis for any marketing initiative.

Building a Brand

Creating a brand involves a process that demands attention to develop and diligence in carrying out to achieve results. While this may seem difficult, the end result of the branding process is the establishment of a system, and a structure that actually simplifies the marketing process.

Our process serves to match the work a company does best with an audience willing and able to buy, and proceeds to develop a program of visual and verbal messages that reflect the experience the company wants to deliver. Branding is about developing a pull rather than a push, identifying a core value that resonates with your audience and attracts the business that is desired. Understand the current perception of your company:

Effective brand marketing starts by gathering information. What is known and thought now both inside and outside your walls? Do you know who your competitors are and what their brand is? Why do clients choose—or not choose—your company? What do clients value most about your firm? Both quantitative and qualitative information is needed to get a clear picture of your company's, and your industry's, place in the mind of your audience. Evaluate what you do best, what is special and unique:

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Having gathered information, both internal and external feedback is reviewed. It is time to compare the needs that exist in the market with the strengths your firm has or wants to develop. This process identifies the most marketable elements to a given audience, the focus features. Align this strength with the appropriate audience:

With a clear picture of the features your company can deliver well, and an understanding of who would value these features, key benefits are defined and linked to a feeling, the core value, to create further focus. The purpose of brand is to create a durable connection and build recognition, recollection and referrals. Choose how you will show, tell, and organize to convey the alignment:

The visual image, verbal message and experience that will be delivered must be developed to communicate your brand perception. While staff, headlines and images may change from year to year and campaign to campaign; this structure creates a stable base that allows for flexibility without veering off course. Deliver a well-defined image, message and experience with diligence, consistency and repetition:

Educate everyone on your brand so that each staff member becomes a "Keeper of the Brand." The biggest problem with maintaining brand is lack of consistency. A new marketing director, eager designer or outside consultant bored with what has been done and wanting to put their own stamp upon the company can quickly derail a brand. While you can't change your logo every year, regular evaluation of the tools employed to convey your message is vital in keeping both your audience and your staff engaged.

Strong roots are needed to keep a tree healthy, and essential in surviving a storm. When growing your brand, be thorough in discovery, objective in the definition of position and consistent in delivery, and the process of building brand will be time well spent in attracting and maintaining the kind of clients that will grow and sustain your business.

Beth Brodovsky is the president and principal of Iris Creative Group, LLC. Brodovsky earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Communication Design from Pratt Institute, New York. Before launching her own firm in 1996, she spent eight years as a corporate Art Director and Graphic Designer, providing a sound foundation in management and organizational standards and structure. Iris Creative specializes in providing marketing and strategic communication services to clients in service industries and small businesses. For more information contact Beth at

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Bonsai Care

By Andrew Green

What are the basics of effective Bonsai care.

Caring for your Bonsai tree involves many of the same activities associated with caring for a pot plant

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or an indoor plant. Well developed and healthy fibrous roots are essential for the continued good health of your Bonsai tree and repotting is an essential way to manage this process. Normally a young or fast growing Bonsai will need to be repotted roughly once a year; for less prolific growers or older trees it can be done as infrequently as once every five years. You should always try to repot during late winter or early spring when the buds start to swell.

How to repot a Bonsai tree.

The process of repotting a Bonsai tree is one that you should take seriously and follow these simple instructions:

First, you should tidy the tree by carefully pruning off any unwanted, long branches. Also, make sure the tree has been under cover for a few weeks if it is an outdoor Bonsai, this way the soil will be relatively dry. Once you remove the tree from its pot you will be able to see whether it really needs repotting. If it is root bound then you should repot it, however, if there are another few inches of room so the roots can grow a little longer then you can carefully replace the tree in its original pot and continue as normal.

You should remove surface soil from the roots either by hand or using a nylon scrubbing brush. Brush away from the trunk and be careful not to damage any of the roots. Removing the loose soil will give the Bonsai tree a healthier look and feel. Once you've removed most of the soil in this way, you can use a small, fine bristled paintbrush to remove the soil stuck in the roots or that has collected in the roots.

Use a Bonsai fork to comb out the roots. Do this by combing out the roots from underneath and then use scissors to prune up to a third of the roots and then cut out small wedges around the root base to allow fresh soil to collect and keep your Bonsai healthy. Add a layer of grit to the bottom of the pot and then add the Bonsai compost of your choice.

Take the time to position your Bonsai tree in the pot and then push a little more soil into awkward places. Complete this as often as you need to as mentioned above.

Bonsai HQ,

for lots of information about looking after your bonsai.

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