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Side-Step The Big Business Branding Techniques That'll

By Corey Rudl

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From the e-mail I've been receiving lately, it's clear there is a lot of confusion surrounding the topic of online branding.

Nike, Coke-Cola, Budweiser, McDonalds, Levi's, Amazon.com... these are the branding masters. Now the question is, HOW CAN YOU MODEL THEIR SUCCESS?

These days, online branding is being preached as one of the big "Do or Die" marketing strategies. So everyone wants to brand their e-business --- but no one is exactly sure what branding is, how it's done, or where to start.

What is branding, anyway?

Branding is about building a COMPELLING ASSOCIATION between...

A) Your company, your logo, your products, etc.

AND

B) An image, an emotion, or a memorable message that embodies --- implicitly or explicitly --- the BIGGEST BENEFIT you have to offer your customers.

Effective branding creates the kind of FIERCE PRODUCT LOYALTY that leaves customers indifferent to the marketing tactics of the competition.

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It's what compels you to walk past all of those no-name-brand on-sale colas at the local grocery store and pick up the 6-pack of Coca-Cola that costs three times more. It's what makes children plead and beg to go back to McDonalds again and again. And it's what has made the phrase "Just Do It" synonymous with Nike.

Say "Amazon.com," and people think of "The Earth's Biggest Bookstore." Go to Burger King because you can "Have It Your Way." Buy Energizer batteries because they "Just keep going, and going, and going." And "When you care enough to

send the very best," send a Hallmark card.

But the slogans and taglines are only part of it. Think of the Hallmark commercials. These tearjerker mini-dramas are built around love and family values, ending with someone showing they "care enough" by giving a loved-one a Hallmark card. **THEY EVOKE STRONG EMOTIONS THAT DRIVE THEIR SLOGAN HOME.**

And think about the Nike logo -- the "Swoosh" that represents the wing of the Greek goddess Nike, the personification of victory. While it's probably safe to say that the majority of people are unaware of its mythological significance, **THEIR LOGO HOLDS JUST AS MUCH MEANING AS THEIR NAME.**

It's all very impressive, right? Well... yes. But before you jump on the bandwagon, let's take a realistic look at the "big branding picture" to see where your small or home-based e-business fits into this.

First, let's debunk the **THREE MAJOR BRANDING MYTHS I frequently encounter...**

MYTH #1:

I need to make my company or product a household name.

TRUTH:

You'll be most successful and most profitable if you **CLOSELY TARGET YOUR MARKET!** Focus on getting your business name and your advertising in front of your best potential customers -- the people who have an expressed interest in what you're offering -- as opposed to everyone!

MYTH #2:

Branding my business online means buying thousands of dollars worth of high-visibility banner impressions.

TRUTH:

Banner advertising just isn't as profitable as it once was. Ads that once pulled 5% to 10% click-throughs are now lucky to pull 0.6% to 0.8%, if even that.

You'll be far more successful if you focus your limited advertising dollars on more performance-based advertising. Pay for customers... not overpriced, unproven advertising.

MYTH #3:

I'll need to spend a lot of money if I want to gain

brand recognition.

TRUTH:

There are plenty of free and low-cost techniques that you can use to brand your e-business.

If you're a small or home-based business then, chances are, you don't have the millions of advertising dollars it takes to build a nationally recognized brand and make your company a household name — at least not yet!

So let's **SKIP THE HIGH-PRICED LARGE CORPORATE BRANDING TECHNIQUES** that I'm seeing pushed everywhere I look...

— after all, these strategies simply don't translate to e-businesses with limited advertising budgets —

... and instead, let me give you some practical information.

COST-EFFECTIVE BRANDING TECHNIQUES THAT YOU CAN START USING TODAY:

1) DEVELOP A STRONG UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

Imagine yourself sitting across the table from your best potential customer. In one sentence — one very short sentence — clearly communicate how he or she will benefit from doing business with you.

Your message should be clear, the language simple, and it should be easy to remember. There's no room for wordy corporate mumbo jumbo here.

I know this is a pretty tall order... but your hours of agonizing, writing, brainstorming, and rewriting will pay off in the end. This will be the message that your market will identify you by and associate you with.

2) TARGET YOUR MARKET

The beauty of running an online business is that you can reach literally hundreds of thousands of targeted potential customers all over the world — people who want to buy what you're selling — for little or no cost.

It's what has made it possible for small and home-based business owners like you to take the Internet by storm and **MAKE OUTRAGEOUS PROFITS WITH VERY LIMITED ADVERTISING BUDGETS.**

Why would you turn a blind eye to this **CRITICAL ADVANTAGE** by spreading your limited advertising dollars across the entire web — trying to sell your product to everyone — instead of focusing on those people who want to buy from you?

It just doesn't make sense.

So I know I've already mentioned this, but it's worth saying again. It's **ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL** that you target your market.

3) WHENEVER POSSIBLE, MAKE YOUR MESSAGE INTERACTIVE

If you can compel people to actively engage your marketing message rather than passively hear or view it, you'll dramatically increase the probability that they're going to absorb it, remember it, and repeat it.

One of the best ways to make your marketing message interactive is through **VIRAL MARKETING**. To read a previous Marketing Tips article that explains exactly what you can do to make your marketing message viral, visit...
<http://www.marketingtips.com/newsletter/issue33/page1.html>

4) BE CONSISTENT IN VOICE, FORMAT, AND DELIVERY

In order to engrave your brand in the minds of your target market, you need to consistently repeat your message to them...

* DESIGN A SIGNATURE FILE that contains your message and attach it to the end of every e-mail you send. It costs you nothing and it's an easy, effective way to repeat your message to those people you have direct contact with — your best potential and repeat customers!

* Your web site design, logos, and graphics should, if possible, VISUALLY EMPHASIZE AND REINFORCE your message. Check out the McDonald's web site at <http://www.mcdonalds.com> Does that yellow and red look familiar? Think about how you can similarly use your web site design to further impress your brand in the memory of your visitors.

* Your NEWSLETTER CONTENT AND YOUR WEB SITE CONTENT should all ultimately contribute to your marketing message. There is no room for distractions like articles or links that don't move you towards your main goal (to sell your product, remember?).

5) NURTURE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS AND SUBSCRIBERS

If they already know you, if they're already familiar with who you are and what you do, if they've already bought something from you, then you should be building on these existing relationships.

MAINTAIN REGULAR CONTACT VIA E-MAIL (it's free!), and consistently remind them who you are, what you do, and most importantly, how they stand to benefit from continuing to do business with you.

If you play your cards right, not only will you PROFIT FROM THEIR REPEAT BUSINESS, you may also persuade them to "spread the good word" to others with similar interests.

6) BE VISIBLE TO YOUR BEST POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

A big part of branding is obviously about getting your name

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in front of your best potential customers, so that when the time comes for them to buy, **THEY'LL CHOOSE YOU OVER THE COMPETITION!**

Here are a few powerful ways that you can do this...

* **WRITE ARTICLES** that contain information that will be of interest to your target market and then offer them to industry newsletters and web sites free of charge. Web masters and editors will appreciate the free, quality content, and you'll get your name and URL in front of your target market.

* **PARTICIPATE IN NEWSGROUPS AND DISCUSSION FORUMS** where your target market hangs out. This is an easy, no-cost way to develop your reputation as an industry expert. Simply make yourself available to answer questions and provide participants with information that they will value.

* **SUBMIT YOUR WEB SITE TO THE SEARCH ENGINES AND DIRECTORIES.** Also be sure to search for directories that are geared towards your industry and request a listing.

* **REQUEST LINKS FROM SITES WHERE YOUR TARGET MARKET MEETS.** This is not only a great way to increase your visibility, it's also an extremely powerful way to attract large volumes of highly targeted traffic — yet it's frequently dismissed or overlooked!

* **USE BANNER ADVERTISING – IN MODERATION!** With well-designed banners and a targeted ad campaign, you **CAN** make money with banner advertising. Just be sure to educate yourself on the latest, most cutting-edge banner techniques before getting started.

To read an article on designing effective banners that really work, visit...

<http://www.marketingtips.com/newsletter/issue35/page1.html>

* **START YOUR OWN AFFILIATE PROGRAM.** With your own Affiliate Program, you can enlist an army of affiliates who will spread your name and your marketing message across the web — and you don't pay them a cent until they make a sale.

To read an article on how you can start and profit from your very own Affiliate Program, visit...
<http://www.marketingtips.com/newsletter/issue19/index.html>

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL:

With branding being hyped as one of *the* marketing strategies to pursue right now, I worry that some of you may be steered off-track.

While it's a good idea to be aware of and actively direct how your e-business is being branded, remember that there is a key difference between creating awareness and actually closing sales.

Given the innumerable marketing strategies that you can use to simultaneously create brand awareness AND draw targeted traffic to your web site, there is no reason for you to be spending your limited advertising dollars on branding techniques that don't return a significant profit.

Avoid being sucked in by the myth that the entire web needs to know who you are. Focus on your target market and realize that most forms of traffic generation ultimately enhance awareness of your brand.

You are spelling out your brand message, directly and indirectly, with everything that you do, say, and sell.

Stop Branding Your Products and Start Branding Yourself!

By Wild Bill Montgomery

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Branding has power. Real power. A power that you can measure. But for those of us who have the dream of creating our own Internet Empire from our home cubicle or kitchen table, the Real Branding Power comes not from branding your business or product, but from Branding Yourself! Branding "You" (a phrase borrowed from Rick Beneteau) is a power that you can't afford not to understand and use.

"Branding Yourself" is the application of certain

techniques which will help you gain popularity on the Internet by making yourself well known, maybe as an Expert in your field. When people recognize you as an expert you will gain popularity by means of more free publicity than you can imagine. Picture seeing an article written mentioning your name as an authority on Marketing or mentioning you for nothing more than quoting something you said. The point I'm trying to make is that you are seen as an Authority or better put, a "Personality". Now, try to fathom thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people seeing you in the same light. This is what successful Self-Branding is all about. You don't need to necessarily be an expert. You just need to be seen, heard and talked about.

How do you Brand Yourself? There are many techniques and methods, but it can be as simple as a hidden personality trait, a nickname (maybe something like "Wild Bill"), or helping others by consultation or assistance. You must look for ways to literally become a Celebrity in the eyes of the world or at least a small, select part of it. It could be by getting your name known as the "guy/gal who had the answer or made the comment". Is that all there is to it? Of course not.

The one thing I am slowly and surely learning about marketing on the Internet is that you have to build a name for yourself before people will trust you and trust your products. Trust is a big issue on the Internet. Can you blame people? The Internet is overrun

with rip-offs and fast-talking scam artists. Their whole existence is centered on the sole pursuit of relieving you of your money for a product with lots of promise and no result.

I recently purchased a book by Rick Beneteau, called "Branding You and Breaking the Bank". Now you might think that Rick had some kind of big money backing him. "Sure", you say, "that's the only way to get into the big time". Well, let me tell you Rick started out a few years ago from the very bottom. The one thing that he understood that many of us don't, is that you must Brand Yourself, whether it's as an expert in marketing

or the guy next door who'll help you out with a problem. But, one thing is for sure; Rick knows how to do it. Would you like to learn more about Personal Branding and how to get your name known and respected? Learn how to get thousands of dollars worth the free advertising?

Is this a recommendation for a product? I have to say, without a doubt "YES"! But I am so thrown back by this book, that I simply had to write an article around it. Many of you may have read some of my articles, and I know that some of you read them religiously (thank you very much). Those of you that do, know that I do not write articles supporting products in this manner. I may have mentioned a product in the process, that's part of the Biz. But, I cannot stress enough the importance of "Personal Branding". I wholeheartedly support and recommend Rick's Book, "Branding You and Breaking the Bank".

This Powerful new book puts YOU on the fast track to becoming an Internet Celebrity. Not only does Rick teach you step-by-step how he did it; he also asked many of the top Internet personalities to share their success secrets with you. If you're at all serious about achieving success on the Internet, you need to start Branding YOU and Breaking the Bank!

Do yourself a favor. Check It Out!

I'll be e-Seeing you Soon



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