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What's Your Identity?

By Claire Cunningham

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Identity theft is a hot topic these days - at least on a personal level. In business, though, the serious issue is identity neglect!

What do I mean? I mean many businesses don't pay attention to identity issues. That's because they don't understand maintaining a consistent identity is a low-cost way to maximize impact.

Consistency and professionalism are the keys. That's what can help even the smallest business over time.

Consistency means repetition, and repetition is what solidifies ideas in our brains. Professionalism is about looking good. It's "dress for success" on a corporate level. If you want your company taken seriously, present a professional image

Here's a basic identity checklist for business owners.

- 1)COMPANY NAME - Is it distinctive? Memorable? Descriptive of what you do? Is it registered in your state? Can you/should you trademark it? (You may need to consult an attorney on this last question.)
- 2)COMPANY LOGO - Have you identified a distinctive typeface? Do you have a symbol? Do you need one? Have you had your logo produced professionally? Have you identified logo color(s)? Do you use all of this consistently?
- 3)TAG LINE - Do you need one? Do you have one? Does it clearly describe your company's unique position? Is it customer benefit oriented? Do you use it consistently?
- 4)PRODUCT NAMES - Do you have them? Do they follow a pattern? Do they make sense with your company name?

If you answered "No" or "Don't know" to any of these questions or if you're thinking about changing your name, logo or tag line, consult a marketing communications professional with experience in company identity issues. Investment of time and money up front will yield benefits in the long run.

Fighting Identity Theft

By James H. Dimmitt

Chances are good that you know someone who has been victimized by the fastest growing crime – identity theft. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reported that there were 10 million cases of identity theft in 2002 alone. It's estimated that someone's identity is stolen every 79 seconds.

The bad news is with increasing amounts of personal information available to an experienced identity thief, it shows few signs of slowing down. The good news is that identity fraud is now a federal crime with stiff penalties for those who perpetrate these crimes.

Here are a few simple steps you can take now to minimize your risk:

- 1) Check your credit report annually, if not more often. Most victims of identity theft don't realize they've been victimized until 14 months after the crime. By then the damage is done and you will spend a significant amount of time and money trying to correct it.
- 2) Keep your Social Security number private. Do not have it printed on your personal checks or drivers license. Do not share it with anyone, including merchants, unless they can provide a good reason for having it. Once someone has your Social Security number they have the key to unlocking your identity and using it fraudulently.
- 3) Shred offers for pre-approved credit cards that you receive by mail. Do the same with any receipts that contain account numbers or your Social Security number. Identity thieves are not afraid to go "dumpster diving" in order to obtain your personal information.

Identity theft has become the fastest growing crime because it is the most profitable crime. On average, the loss from identity theft is about \$18,000.00. Taking these precautions now can you save you from becoming another statistic in the fight against identity theft.

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James H. Dimmitt

James is editor of "TO YOUR CREDIT", a weekly free newsletter. Subscribe to the newsletter by visiting

. He is also author of "Identity Theft – How to Avoid

Becoming the Next Victim!" available at

Fighting Identity Theft

A new career will change who you are

About Those ID Cards

WILL THE REAL YOU PLEASE STAND UP? How To Prevent Identity Theft



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