

Your Identity Speaks Loudly...What Are You Saying?

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By Wendy Maynard

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Your corporate identity is a graphic expression of who you are as an organization. It plays a major role in what sells your company and its products. Everything that identifies your business, including your logo, color scheme, and tagline, work together to create an image that your customers remember. Building a corporate identity that bolsters your business objectives is a subtle, yet important part of achieving business success.

How do you want your business to be recognized? What image do you want to call forth in people's minds? You may choose an identity that is fun and wacky if you run a family fun center, or calm and serious if you operate a funeral home. The mistake many businesses make is to not think about it at all. Your company has a corporate identity whether you intentionally developed one or not. It can be difficult to turn an unplanned image around. And chances are, it doesn't convey the image you need to boost sales.

The best identity plan is one that is strategically designed to answer the following questions: What is the essence of your company? What message are you trying to send to your key audiences? What kind of name represents your desired image? What is the look and feel of your logo? Will the color and texture of the paper you print your business cards and brochure underscore the image you want to convey? How about the voice you use to do radio advertising? Everything must work together consistently to reinforce your image again and again and again.

There are dozens of ways that you can carefully develop your identity and project your businesses' personality. Specific, intentional creative choices will deliver a desired impact. A professional designer can help take your corporate identity to the next level. He or she can also help you develop marketing materials to reflect your image. Here are some elements to consider:

1. **Business Name:** Your company name should reflect your business personality. It should also be concise, memorable, unique, and appropriate to your product or service.

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2. Logo: An effective logo is visually simple and easily recognizable. It symbolizes the essence of your business. The shape of your logo expresses different meanings. For example, curves can signify an organization that offers supportive services. Straight, sharp lines can represent a company with a technological focus.

3. Typographic Identity: The font that you use should complement your logo. There are thousands of fonts to select from, choose carefully since each offers subtle visual elements that can reinforce, or detract from, your business image.

4. Corporate colors: Different colors elicit different emotional responses and further serve to enhance your identity. For instance, deep blues represent trust, while oranges and yellows are fun and playful.

5. Tagline: What is the most important message you want to deliver about your business? A tagline

describes your business in a short phrase that can be included on your letterhead, business cards, brochures, and so on.

If you are just starting your business, carefully think through all of the identity materials you use to promote your company. And, if you have been in business for a while and your identity doesn't represent your level of professionalism, consider revamping it. Remember, you only get one chance to make a first impression. What does your identity say about you?

Wendy Maynard, your friendly marketing maven, is the owner of Kinesis. Kinesis specializes in marketing, graphic and website design, and business writing. Visit

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Fighting Identity Theft

By James H. Dimmitt

Chances are good that you know someone who has been victimized by the fastest growing crime –

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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

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Fighting Identity Theft

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A new career will change who you are

About Those ID Cards

Scams Exposed

30-Day Low Carb Diet 'Ketosis Plan'

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