

Branding and Re-Branding

Our clients turn to us for brand development because as New Jersey's most respected advertising agency, we really understand how to build better brands – and have done so for dozens of companies, both big and small. Branding is a lot more than just creating a cool logo and smart tagline to help uniquely position your company. True, those are key corporate identity elements and a great deal of time and thought go into creating them, but brand development involves way more than that.

According to The American Marketing Association, a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers." Your brand is your most valuable asset and it's important to spend time researching, defining, and building your brand. After all, your brand is the source of a promise to your consumer. It's the foundation of all your marketing communications and must be fully integrated into your strategies at every point of contact. Your brand lives within the hearts and minds of customers, clients, and prospects. It is the sum total of their experiences and perceptions, some of which you can influence, and some that you cannot.

Brand development is important not only for b2c companies, but b2b as well. In fact, three of the top 10 brands in 2009, as ranked by Interbrand, generate a sizable amount of revenue from their b2b customers: IBM, Microsoft and GE. In the competitive b2b world, branding is less about cool, hip monikers – and more about thought leadership. Particularly during a slow economy, b2b customers conduct significant research leading up to purchases. That means marketers have to educate them early on, and establish their brand as a credible and trusted resource that gets their problems and has the solution. To help b2b organizations be seen as the thought leader, the online marketing blog TopRank has a few suggestions:

1. Consistently produce useful, relevant and informative content

From a company blog to Twitter to YouTube, there is no end to the content channels available. Provide your customers and prospects the latest industry news and insight on trends through:

- Offering a white paper through an email marketing campaign
- Creating videos and promoting through YouTube and on your web site
- Conducting interviews with industry influentials and turn it into blog posts

2. Network digitally and in person

Nothing communicates a brand more than direct involvement with customers and prospects. In that regard, online social networking has opened a new door. According to a recent eMarketer [study](#), six in 10 b2b marketers planned to up spending on social media in 2010. Whether your organization integrates Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or another social network into its branding efforts, the same rules apply:

- Social media is about engaging in conversations, not just pushing products
- It's not about the masses; it's about your target audience
- It's listening and hearing before selling and talking

3. Get personal and be real

B2c marketers seem to have this concept nailed. But humanizing your company for customers and prospects is just as important in b2b. [For one TopRank® Online Marketing client, an industrial part distributor for the bulk powder processing industry, humanizing its image was a top concern. The TopRank team created the Powder Doctor, a unique character, to relate to customers and prospects through email marketing campaigns. This humorous cartoon character offers advice – Dear Abby style – for common industry problems. Powder Doctor campaigns increased sales for Powder-Solutions by 83%.]

4. Differentiate

It's tough to build your b2b brand if you're just like everyone else. Standing out from the crowd is easy when your products/services are truly one-of-a-kind. When they are commodities, establishing a unique value proposition is tricky.

5. Leverage proof points

It's perfectly appropriate – and necessary – to toot your own horn from time to time as part of your b2b branding efforts. Whether it's an impressive media placement or a web traffic milestone, implement proof points illustrating why your organization is a thought leader into marketing communications.

Are You Ready to Take Branding to the Next Level?

B2b branding through thought leadership is not as easily quantifiable as other marketing efforts. And investments in reputation building might not pay off as immediately as pay-per-click or email marketing. But building a recognizable b2b brand pays off in the form of long-term increased referrals, positive brand conversations on both digital and in-person channels, web traffic and sales.