

THOUGHTS ON CREATING A POSITIVE BRAND IMAGE

by: Steven Presar

For any business to become truly successful, it needs to create positive brand recognition for its product.

This is especially true in small businesses, where there may be thousands of similar companies vying for the customer's attention. The easiest and most fruitful way to think of a brand is as an IMAGE that the audience remembers.

This means that successful branding of a service or product is a matter of creating an image that is Positive, Relevant, and Memorable.

First and foremost, you want to create an image of your product or service (or company, for that matter) that is **positive**.

You want to create an emotional association (such as happiness or fun) with the product. According to researchers, there are **two basic ways that you can create these associations**.

The first way is through direct experience. In this approach, a customer's experience with the product or service impacts on the way that they see it -- i.e. a positive experience means a positive association. This can be very important if you are trying to reach repeat customers.

It is usually hard to use direct experience to brand a product or service using just a web site. However, remember that a person will often judge your company based on their experiences with your web site. Therefore, it is very important that you make their experience a favorable one -- one where they can get their information quickly and easily.

A second approach to branding that can be used more easily in a web environment is to create indirect associations. This can be done in a number of ways. The words you choose to describe your products, the name you give them, and the graphics/pictures that you use on your web site can help to create an emotional association.

The first step is to determine what qualities you wish to project -- do you want to focus on the reliability of the product, or the speed, or the money possibilities?

Once you have made this basic, vital decision, then you need to look for words, descriptions, and graphics that will project these same qualities. If you look at the naming of car models, you can see some good examples of this -- A Dakota, for instance, creates an association of wild ruggedness, while a Mustang projects the image of spirit and speed.

Remember that there are also many other factors that will also indirectly affect how your company and product are branded. **The way that you interact with your customers is one of the most important of these.** Make sure that your company reflects the same qualities that you want to have associated with your product or service.

Otherwise, you may be sending your customers conflicting messages. For instance, the name of your product might be CHEETAH, but if it takes three weeks for you to respond to emails, your brand will probably NOT be associated with speed!

Branding your product or service can be a difficult process. Often, it will take many repetitions of a message before a brand becomes recognized. It is therefore very important that you put thought into the process before you start selling your image.

About the author: Steven Presar provides news and articles regarding starting or maintaining a small business