

DRAPERY & DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

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Building a Rock Solid Brand
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Building a Rock Solid Brand for your Business

By Jenna Abbott



"The Ultimate Driving Machine"
"Can you hear me now?"

Chances are you had no trouble identifying the companies with the above slogans. BMW has spent years cultivating its image as a high end automaker and "Can you hear me now" has become ubiquitous with the Verizon Network. McDonalds has cornered the market on the world's fast food and Nike has built an empire and made billions using the "swoosh" and the tag line "just do it". Yellow rubber bracelets allowed Lance Armstrong's LIVESTRONG Foundation to raise millions of dollars for cancer research and spawned a host of rubber bracelet imitators. While you may not be as big or as internationally known as these super-brands, building your brand recognition is vital to growing your business.

The key to a good brand is to have your business be quickly identifiable to the consumer. A solid, recognizable brand can mean the difference between getting the job and having the job awarded to one of your competitors. It conveys quality, value for the dollar, provides a solid first impression and evokes positive feelings towards the business. If your brand is strong, trusted and well recognized, many times the consumer will go with the trusted brand without shopping around.

Elements that make up a Brand

Your brand usually will be made up of your company name, a logo, and perhaps a tag line or positioning statement, all of which should subtly showcase the "personality" of your business. In the PR business, a well recognized brand is often known as "sticky", meaning that it is instantly recognizable, stands out from the competition and leaves no question as to what business the firm is in. Sticky branding, like that of the companies mentioned in the opening paragraph of this article, is a most valuable asset to the companies they represent. They are consistent, repetitive and have a sense of longevity. Regardless of whether you are a design professional, a wholesale workroom, a retail workroom or an installer, a sticky brand is what you are striving to achieve. To illustrate this I have chosen one of my favorite examples for this article, The Impeccable Nest owned and operated by Nicole Kemer.

Choosing the Company Name

Your company name is the keystone of your brand. It is the face your company presents to the world so it's important that you choose your company name carefully. Choose a strong name that represents the products and services your company provides and it can help you tremendously. A poor choice can spell disaster or, at the very least, discontent. In extreme cases, a really poor choice of name can drive your potential customers to choose another service provider. Finding a good company name requires a multi pronged approach. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I do?
- What kind of customers do I want to attract?
- What feelings do I want to evoke in my customers?
- What is my specialty?
- What are the words that describe what I do especially well?
- Do I have any restrictions on what I want to do?
- How am I different from my competition?
- What makes my business special?

This example, provided by
Nicole Kemer illustrates a
successful branding concept.



Write your answers down and you will see the profile of your business start to emerge. You may find it helpful to engage the help of trusted business associates, friends, or your spouse to brainstorm potential business names with you. Don't judge at this point, just write them all down. Once the names are on paper, the weeding out process can begin. Narrow your list to 3-5 contenders and try them out on your friends and family. Be sure that you speak them out loud as well as see how they look in print to ensure they sound and look good. Compare your contenders with your list of answered questions from above and your winner will start to emerge. Finally, check to be sure that your chosen name is not already in use and check to see that the URL is available. Depending on the requirements in your state, you may need to register your new name or you may be able to begin using it immediately.

Developing the Logo

Your logo should instantly communicate the nature of the business and give your customer a visual identity of your work. It should be appealing to the eye and work well in the context of all of your marketing materials. Think about how your logo will translate in color and in black and white as well as how it will look on-line and in print.

There are several alternatives when it comes to developing a logo. You can use free clip art, design your own from scratch, or you can hire a professional to help you. Since your logo will be integral to your business image, I highly recommend you work with a professional graphic artist. You can expect to pay between \$300 and \$500 for the design work, and many graphics professionals will offer you a better price on a package made up of logo design, business card design, letterhead, envelopes etc. Since you will almost certainly need these items as you launch or re-brand your business, I do suggest having all of the design work done at the same time. This will give you a cohesive suite of products that you can have printed as your own personal treasury allows.

A skilled graphics professional will be able to guide you through the process of developing your logo by asking questions about your business and the kind of "look and feel" you wish to convey. They will ask about your company name and why you chose it, your color likes and dislikes, whether you want your logo to be fun, serious, whimsical, abstract or classic. Many graphic artists will also want to know something about you and your personal style. Think carefully about your answers, as they will directly influence the initial ideas for your logo. Once you've completed the pre-work, the fun stuff can begin! Your graphics professional will typically provide you a number of initial ideas, or proofs, for your review. Once you have made your choice work can begin on your new corporate identity items.

Crafting the Tagline

The tagline or positioning statement is the final component of your brand. It is usually used in conjunction with the logo and business name in all promotional materials, from business cards to Web sites. This, once again, ensures consistency and continuity of both visual and verbal image the company presents to its customers. The positioning statement should clearly state or reinforce what your business does and should be honest, brief, memorable and as unique as your company logo. Often, the consumer will remember the tagline just as vividly as the company name.

Building the Brand

Once you have established your company name, logo and tagline, it's time to use them to build your brand. You can consider doing a launch for your new brand which gives you the opportunity to contact all of your past clients. In addition, you may wish to build or purchase a mailing list of potential clients to send your launch material out to and don't forget to send press releases to your local media. Make sure that your brand is everywhere! Update your website, order your business cards, your letterhead etc. The more people see your brand, the more familiar it will become to them and the more they'll associate it with you and your business. Remember, repetition is key to your success so get your stuff out there and maybe you'll be the next big thing!

Jenna Abbott is the sole proprietor of Sew Elegant by Jenna, a "to the trade" workroom founded in 2001 and located in Sacramento California. Jenna specializes in fabricating exquisite custom window treatments, bedding and table linens for the Sacramento Interior Design community. She offers a full complement of services including measuring, fabrication and installation. Her work has been featured in Sacramento Magazine and the Interiors section of the Sacramento Bee. She is a founding member of the Northern California Chapter of the WCAA, a National WCAA Director and a proud alumna of the Custom Home Furnishings Academy in Charlotte, NC.

In the next issue, Jenna will share how her own brand evolved from a simple concept in 2001 to the full corporate identity suite of today that was thoughtfully created to compliment her long term marketing goals.



CHF Network Forum Now Offers Free Video Clips to Members

Check out the new Video Screening room on the CHF Network Forum where you can view short videos showing helpful tips and techniques from the workroom. A sampling of what is available:

- The Dreaded Twist Cord
- How to Cut Sheer
- Tag Gun Tips
- The Long Handled Pencil
- Sewing Center Seam Cartridge Pleats

...and much more.



The video clips can be found by logging onto the forum and scrolling down to the "Video Screening Room" sub-forum under the Special Features section.

There will be new videos added every month, be sure to check back often for updates.