



Branding: Your Unique Identity

Is branding important?

Branding is the primary source of competitive advantage for any company and should be considered your single-most valuable strategic asset. It is equally important in both business and consumer markets. Without brands we would live in a world of undifferentiated products that are traded solely on price, according to the laws of supply and demand.

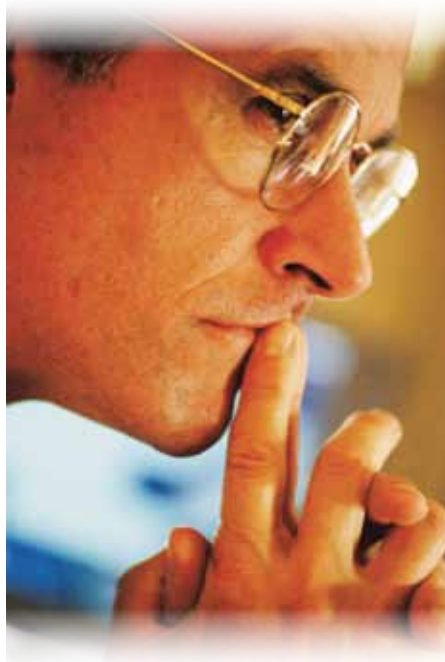
Branding enables companies to actively influence demand by encouraging consumers to base their purchase decisions on factors other than price, location, colour, etc. It tells how your product or service can contribute to their business and sets you apart from your competitors. Differentiation is the most fundamental and significant concept in the creation of powerful brands.

Is branding effective?

Do you want to add value and create demand for your product offering? When you execute a successful branding strategy you give your company market power.

When customers specify or demand your brand, you become the preferred market supplier. This earns you a competitive advantage by giving you leverage and credibility to increase sales, improve margins and expand into new markets.

“Brands are all about trust. You buy a brand because you consider it a friend.”
- Michael Perry



Why should I buy from you?

It is one question every potential customer asks before obtaining your products or services, and the most common question business owners cannot answer effectively. Regardless of the industry, any business that lacks proper brand direction will inevitably end up conveying the same message to their customers as their competition.

If you do not stand out from the pack, you leave it to customers to choose, and they will base their decisions on generic factors instead of the strengths of your business.

When you are selling your product or service you need a unique identity - an appealing but distinct idea that distinguishes you from your competition and becomes the foundation for all of your marketing. You need to be branded!

How does branding work?

Branding begins with the development of a corporate identity, so that when a customer thinks of a commodity, your company will be positioned in their mind as the brand of choice. Essentially, your corporate identity includes all materials that you wish to have associated with your business. All facets of the branding strategy aim to create positive associations when customers hear or see your brand name.

All related materials that are used for marketing, sales, and promotional purposes must wear the same corporate identity to maintain consistency and reinforce brand image. If a customer is happy, they often become avid spokespeople for your company. However, they will also be the first to give negative publicity if they are unhappy. This illustrates that a positive brand image is imperative for success.



Why are you unique?

The next step is to articulate your uniqueness. This will require careful copy writing and editing to create a message that will resonate with your clients. Your unique identity should appear in every aspect of your marketing; in the headlines and copy of your brochures, advertisements, direct mail campaigns, in the pitches your salespeople make, in your presentations and your website.

The criteria for a unique identity statement are:

It must differentiate you from your competition

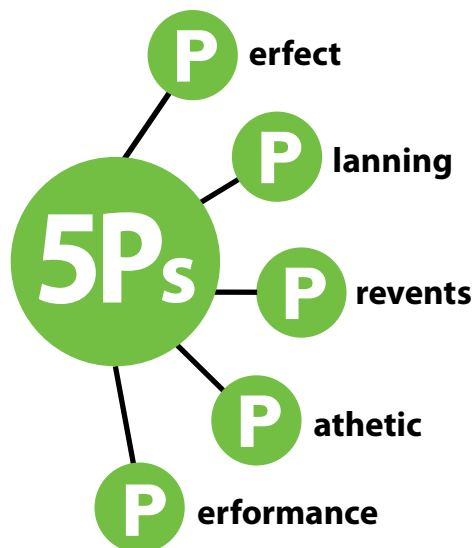
It must be meaningful to your customers and prospects because it appeals to an important issue

It must address a receptive audience

You must be able to articulate it in 30 seconds or less

It must be true

If you do not have a unique identity statement that you can use in all of your marketing, set aside some time to work on it and commit to having one as soon as possible; if properly developed it will provide benefits for the long term.



How will branding benefit your company?

There are a multitude of reasons why a branding message that clearly defines and communicates your products' added-value can benefit your company.

A brief summary of branding benefits:

Increased sales and profit margins

Higher brand positioning in prospect and customer minds

Improved credibility

Increased market share

Greater employee morale

New referrals generated by current customer support

Product / service longevity

Investment in the development of your brand will reward your business in numerous ways and provide your business with the basis to move it to the next level.

Where is branding applied?

Branding is applied to all aspects of business; it is a critical component to a successful business strategy. In order to promote your product as the brand of choice, it is imperative to develop a consistent and striking message that carries uniformly through all forms of communications which can include:

Presentation materials

Corporate identity

Packaging

Sales support information

Stationery (letterhead, business cards, envelopes)

Work place environment

Website

Marketing literature

Product leaflets

Trade show stands

Dealer / reseller sales literature

Power point, CD ROM, DVD presentations

Marketing your product requires agility, flexibility, and creativity. Even the most successful brands must constantly adapt to keep up with cultural changes and shifting preferences.



What are the most common branding mistakes?

● **Ignoring branding**

Traditionally, branding has been seen as a consumer marketing discipline. Research has shown that business purchase decisions are more complex than previously thought, and companies base their decisions on a variety of factors. Business-to-Business companies ignore branding at their own expense.

● **Concentrating on the wrong attributes**

Communicating what customers feel is important. In technology markets, quality of support and commitment to product development may outweigh price and delivery. In commodity markets, support and information can differentiate products with no performance advantage.

● **Failing to communicate brand strengths**

Marketing communications that focus only on the product may fail to communicate important brand strengths. Customer presentations, corporate brochures, public relations activities and corporate advertising can be used to present a more balanced picture.

● **Inconsistency**

A lot of organizations attempt the do-it-yourself approach and usually fail to clearly communicate the branding message in a meaningful way. If you want your brand to be given the optimum chance for success, it is prudent to retain the services of branding professionals.

● **Failing to monitor customer perceptions**

Tracking market research is critical. You must know how your customers perceive you so that you can plan your brand communications. Tracking changes in perception enables you to measure the effectiveness of your communications and adjust accordingly.

● **Ignoring important communication channels**

Brand values are communicated through many different channels, not just advertising and marketing media. Making sure that every aspect of your business reflects the brand values that are important to your customers is key.



Without a strong brand, your product is in danger of being regarded as yet another commodity that is purchased solely on price. Owning a powerful brand differentiates you from the competition and enables you to build and retain customer loyalty.

How can you use brand values?

Brand values are company and product attributes that are most important to your customers and prospects and should be portrayed in your communication. If you have branding that is weak, you should consider ways of improving it.

Here are some of the business and product components and attributes that may impact brand values:

Fitness for purpose

Warranty/quality

Value for money/finance

Company reliability

Proven products

Investment in product

Development

Distribution

Customer base

Customized products

Partnership/consulting

Customer service

Technical support/training

Environment

Ordering procedures

Product information

Brand values relate to many areas, from product attributes to less tangible aspects of a company's operations. It is important to identify how your products and company are perceived by different types of customers.

• What are the benefits?

The Firstbase branding, marketing and design solutions emerge only after research, analysis and strategic thinking. Dedicated to each client's business needs, this winning formula has evolved into a unique process that guides every Firstbase brand-building program.

Benefits of working with Firstbase:

Optimize sales margins

Revitalize mature products

Improve market share

Penetrate new markets

Stretch your budget further

New perspective on an old concept

Clearly communicate your product and service offerings

Increase sales and profits

Add value to products and services

Improve brand awareness and visibility

A branding program will yield positive results, providing it is carefully implemented. It must be treated as an extension of your product or service.

Our experience in branding includes:

Name, identity and logo development

Communications and brochure development

Websites, packaging, tradeshow

Newsletter and magazine publishing

Print advertisements and campaigns

We also provide comprehensive brand guidelines and ongoing support to help clients maintain their brand's integrity after its implementation.

• Why are we different?

Unlike others in our marketplace, you no longer have to choose between theory and practice. We provide a seamless service from initial consultation to successful implementation, operational support, fine-tuning and beyond. Our capable team works closely with you to ensure that the plan is implemented effectively.

• We build partnerships

Rather than getting involved in numerous one-off projects, we establish long-term partnerships with our clients and we offer an all-encompassing approach to each client's specific branding and marketing needs. It is through these strategic partnerships that we become an extension of our clients' enterprises and not simply another vendor. We work within a predefined yearly budget on a retainer basis and are fully accountable for our performance.



• Firstbase's range of in-house services includes:

Strategic planning

Business planning

Relationship management

Market research

Product launches

Communications planning and implementation

Web development

Professional creative design and printing solutions

• Time is money



• Move to the next level

As your partner in helping your business move to the next level, Firstbase stands ready to assist our partners and customers to achieve their business goals. We work closely with you to plan and implement your strategy and achieve measurable results.

• Contact us

Call us today at **1.800.758.2922** for a preliminary **no obligation discussion** to explore the opportunities.

