

Marketing and Branding: A Winning Combination

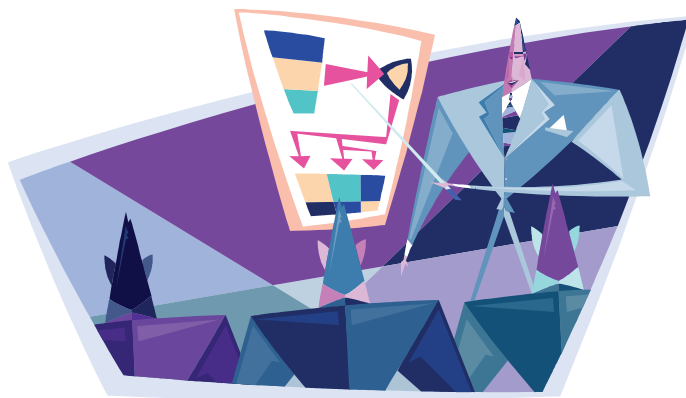
According to Robert Bartels in his book *The History of Marketing Thought*, marketing is “essentially a means of meeting and satisfying certain needs of people. It is a highly developed and refined system of thought and practice characteristic of a period in the development of a market economy.” Marketing is a comprehensive term that includes market research, advertising, salesmanship, wholesale and retail selling, extension of credit and other activities designed to help people buy.

Marketing provides a framework for selling activities and for the materials needed to support sales – a theme that is consistently applied both visually and in content for all sales collateral and advertising. From this consistency it is possible to establish a *brand* – a combination of attributes that customers and prospects come to associate with a products or a business.

We are all familiar with branding as applied to large national and international businesses and organizations and their products. But what about smaller, local businesses and organizations? Does the concept of branding work for them? We believe it does, and that we, as your printer, can help you achieve brand identity on an appropriate scale.

What is a brand?

Originally, a brand was any kind of mark used for identification. Livestock were branded with the mark of their owner’s ranch. Criminals were branded to warn the public. Over the years, the term *brand* evolved to what the American Marketing Association calls “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or groups of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers.”



Branding is continuing to evolve and now encompasses not only a name, but also the ways that a company is distinguished from its competitors: the positioning statement or unique selling proposition; the values of the organization, including how it treats its customers; tangible benefits; and emotional associations.

A good brand achieves these objectives: delivers an unambiguous, well-articulated message; confirms the organization’s credibility; and has an emotional appeal. These factors act together to motivate buyers and increase customer loyalty.

The positioning statement

A positioning statement or unique selling proposition describes in a single sentence of few words, exactly what business a company is in, what benefits it provides, and why it is better than the competition. A good exercise to develop a positioning

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statement is to write an *elevator speech*. Imagine you are in an elevator and someone asks you to what business you are in. You have just the amount of time it takes to get to the next floor to answer the question.

It is a good idea for anyone in sales or anyone who regularly meets customers and prospects to both know and be able to naturally deliver the elevator speech.

Branding applied to marketing materials

Above all, branding is about consistency of the positioning statement as conveyed visually and in words in your company's marketing materials. Ideally, marketing materials repeat and elaborate on the three elements of a positioning statement – what business are you in; what benefits you provide; and why are you better than your competition.

Here are some ways that a positioning statement can be reinforced on marketing materials:

- **Business card.** Reduce the *what business are we in* element of your positioning statement to a slogan or tag line and include it on your business card.
- **Brochure.** Use the structure of the positioning statement to organize the panels of a trifold brochure. State what business you are in, then expand by describing the kind of customers you serve and why. Describe the benefits you provide, then tie those back to the features from which the benefits are derived. Assert your value over your competition and back up the claim by describing how you are different.
- **Product sell sheet.** Keep the layout consistent from product to product, and include the company slogan and positioning statement.
- **Presentation folder/product catalog:** Feature the company logo and slogan prominently.
- **Case studies.** From among your customers, select some examples of ways your company's product or service solved a problem or overcame a challenge. Describe the specific situation and the problem, illustrate your solution and report the result.

Visual images

Earlier we mentioned that a brand has an intangible, emotional component. In fact, this is a crucial element since most buyers respond emotionally when it is time to make the final buying decision. And an important part of evoking an emotional response in customers and prospects is to use strong visuals.

Your company's logo is one visual; so is the color palette, typography, stock photography, and layout. Many companies use a *style sheet* to give detailed instructions about how to use visual elements – and sometimes, how they cannot be used. For a large company, a style sheet can be a lengthy and comprehensive document. But it doesn't have to be. Your brand will be enhanced if you develop and communicate a few simple rules for printing the company logo, provide an approved library of stock photographs, and use the same color palette in all your printed materials.

We can be your brand guardian

Our business is helping you promote yours. We have many resources available to help you develop and communicate your brand through marketing materials and printed products like letterheads, envelopes and note sheets. You can trust us to follow and enforce your company style sheet or graphic guidelines; we can also help you develop graphic standards that are appropriate for your company's size and budget.



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