



Success is About More than Just Your Brand

BRAND IS A BIG PART OF ANY ORGANIZATION'S SUCCESS AND THERE MAY BE MORE TO BRANDING THAN YOU THINK. IN 2005 BILL SCHLEY AND CARL NICHOLS JR WROTE *WHY JOHNNY CAN'T BRAND AND THE BOOK STILL APPLIES TO TODAY'S MARKETING ENVIRONMENT.*

The book's subtitle is *Rediscovering the Lost Art of the Big Idea* and the title is a play on Rudolph Flesch's 1950's book *Why Johnny Can't Read*.

Take care not to confuse brand and logo. Although a logo is an important part of it, the brand is much more. Jeff Bezos is quoted as saying that the brand "is what people say about you when you're not in the room." So it's more than the logo. More than a slogan. More than a mission statement. The brand is your identity.

Think about Apple and you'll probably envision the logo, an apple with a bite taken out of it. Back at the beginning, though, the logo was complex: A framed image of Isaac Newton sitting under a tree with an apple about to fall. A banner around the frame carried the words "Apple Computer Co." Steve Jobs felt that the logo was far too complex and he was right. A year later, the multi-color apple replaced the first logo and the same shape has been in use since then.



But you may also conjure up "Think Different" even though that slogan was last used in 2002. Prior to 1997, when Apple introduced "Think Different", it used "Byte into an Apple" in the late 1970s; "Soon there will be 2

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kinds of people – Those who use computers, and those who use Apples" in the early 1980s; "The Computer for the rest of us" (in 1984); and "The Power to Be Your Best" for 7 years starting in 1990.

Brand is Your Company's Face

MARKETING PROFESSIONALS STRESS THE NEED TO BUILD A BRAND, NOT A BUSINESS.

A business has clients (or, worse, customers) who buy products or services. I differentiate between customers (who buy commodity items) and clients (who depend on your business for guidance and advice). A brand takes the concept of clients a step further by concentrating on enhancing experiences for clients and in developing communities.

The internet makes building communities easier and harder. Easier because there's virtually no admission fee. Anyone can set up a Facebook page and creating a serviceable website will cost perhaps a few thousand dollars. Harder, though, because that lack of an admission fee means anyone can set up a Facebook page or create a website.

One key difference between a business and a brand is the need for a brand to use

marketing, sales, and communications to demonstrate their expertise and authority.

So although anyone can create a Facebook presence, not everyone can create a *compelling* Facebook presence, one that people will follow and want to check in with regularly. Sharing usable information is the difference between a growing brand and a failing business. Fill your Facebook page with photographs, images, and articles that interest your clients to establish a bond based on something you have in common.

Becoming a brand requires commitment and hard work. It's not for everyone. If you're content with the market share you have now and you're averse to effort, you'll be better off not worrying about branding concerns. But if you're ready to expand your reach and work hard to establish a unique brand identity, here are some tasks to consider.

Identify your ideal client: Vague definitions won't do. Be precise. Think about the age, sex, income, and world view of the clients to target. The narrower the better. When you have that person firmly in mind, you can begin to think about how to communicate with her or with him.

Be consistent: Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds" and many people use that to justify their own inconsistencies. There is, however, an important word that they miss: Foolish. Any *foolish* consistency is by definition foolish but consistency pays off if your website, social media, email, and in-person communications

all sound like the same person. These are not foolish consistencies.

Publish or perish: This applies not just to academia. Every time you're quoted in blog, a newspaper or magazine, or on radio or television, your brand moves one step closer to becoming recognizable. It also helps a lot with search engines.

Sell emotions: Even if you're selling a product, you're really selling an emotion. What could be more of a *product* than an automobile, but car dealers know that they can sell safety, belonging, affection, intimacy, self esteem, and nearly all of the needs listed in *Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Needs*. People don't want insurance policies, automobiles, education, or drill bits; they want security, sex appeal, high income, and quarter-inch holes. Nobody buys a drill bit unless they need what the drill bit can do, so you'll need to think in terms of benefits, not features.

Build your community: Brands managers know that sales come from relationships. Posting useful information on-line, sending an interesting newsletter, sharing knowledge with groups such as Rotary or Kiwanis, and paying attention to networking events are just a few ways to connect with people who want to connect with you. Be present! Every person who follows you, and particularly those who follow through by purchasing your product or service, is an opportunity for sales and referrals.

Explain why you are unique: Define your niche based on a passion you truly believe in. Every brand must have a driving force that informs all of its plans and projects. Building a brand is a long-term commitment. It may help to focus on a mission statement that expresses how your brand will improve the world.

Your logo is not your brand, but it represents your brand: Your logo must differentiate your brand from others. Colors, typefaces, type weight, and tag lines are all important. Research the branding used by your competitors and create a logo that's unmistakably yours. Start with screenshots of your main competitors' logos and be sure to avoid similarities by choosing different colors, typefaces, and styles. Saving money by avoiding a professional designer could be expensive.



BUILDING A BRAND IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST A LOGO, A SLOGAN, COLORS, TYPEFACES, AND DESIGN. IT'S ALSO ABOUT CLEARLY VISUALIZING YOUR IDEAL CLIENT, POSITIONING YOUR BRAND TO ATTRACT THE IDEAL CLIENT, AND WORKING DILIGENTLY TO BUILD A COMMUNITY.

Hire a writer: A brand is more than colors, typefaces, and visual style. Language is essential. A midwest drugstore chain hired a well known creative firm to develop its ads in the 1970s and the unique approach worked well. The company is no longer in business, but that's because one of the corporate officers embezzled funds. The language your brand uses should sound like you and the sound should be consistent. A conversational style is usually best. In other words, avoid sounding pompous.

Brand is All Encompassing

EVERYTHING A CLIENT OR POTENTIAL CLIENT MIGHT ENCOUNTER SHOULD BE CAREFULLY PLANNED AND ARRANGED.

If you've ever contacted a company you do business with or are thinking about doing business with and have received what is clearly a canned *one-size-fits-none* response, you've encountered brand failure in action.

Successful brands make sure that their clients believe that they are appreciated and understand that opening a message to a client with the words *Dear Valued Customer* not only is insufficient but actually sends a highly negative message.

Regardless of what you think of Jeff Bezos and Amazon, the organization performs well as a brand.

Anyone who has a problem with an order will receive a prompt response, usually within an hour or two.

The customer service representatives are probably all located off-shore and they have clearly been provided with a series of canned responses, but they invariably apologize for the problem and make every reasonable effort to rectify the situation.

Not everyone can be Amazon, of course. The company has the benefit of scale, but small organizations can establish similar objectives.

You might not be available 24/7, but you can provide an immediate email response from a website that sets an expectation for when a real person will reply.

In fact, setting expectations is an important part of building the brand. Here's an example: We have a dying tree in the back yard and I received an immediate response after filling out a form on an arborist's website.

During business hours on the following day, I received an email telling me that an expert would stop by the following Monday.

Monday morning, the arborist called and told me when he would arrive. He was there on time and provided a comprehensive project summary later in the day.

Yes, we hired the company. This is what building the brand is all about. 🏠