

Chapter 1

Planning a Brand

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1. Why Do I Need to Establish a Brand?


In this day of everyone wanting to be the next expert, thought leader, and YouTube star, creating a personal brand is more important than ever. Now, before you take a deep-breath sigh thinking, “Where do I begin with this?” or “It sounds like too much work,” you need to realize that you probably already have one!

Put this book down and go to your computer. Go to Google and type in your name and city. If you have a website or a LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter account, it will come up in the search. Amazing, right? All this information about you or your brand is already out there on the Internet. It is nearly impossible to get it taken off, deleted, or removed. What you can do is take control and manage your personal brand, making it so people can find and learn the things about you that you want them to know.

Establishing your brand online is a necessary step in your overall marketing plan. More than ever, people find themselves online looking for information or entertainment. Whether the brand represents large corporations, startups, or individuals, it acts as a voice or personification of that business.

In social media, a brand is more important than ever. Without a developed brand, companies and individuals would have no focus in their marketing outreach. People wouldn't connect with companies because they wouldn't find a common ground, and return on investment in social media would be minimal. Social media services and sites are readily available for brands to have online support for many different functions, including video, networking, accounting, and more.

A brand is more than a name. A name may identify a company or individual, but it doesn't actually hold any meaning for the consumer. The brand (or personality) is what helps people to understand what the company is all about. Some of the many social networking sites available for brands include Facebook, LinkedIn, StumbleUpon It!, Yahoo!, Twitter, YouTube, and so on.



When first starting to develop your brand, start with your logo tagline and mission statement to generate ideas for your strategy.



Related Questions

- ➔ 12. What social networks best fit my goals? **Page 40**
- ➔ 75. How can social media websites make this easier? **Page 212**
- ➔ 77. Why does what I do in the real world matter? **Page 216**



Rule of Thumb In social media, personality is the key to success. If you have to use your business name as your brand name online, be sure to add a human touch by letting people know who it is that is speaking on behalf of the company.

Action Item

- ➔ If you do show up on a Google search, write down what page your information is listed on in the search results, and note the order in which your information is listed. Knowing your Google search ranking is useful when you work on improving your website presence so that you have a baseline to start.



Importance

2. Brand or Online Presence— What's the Difference?


Determining the answer to “What is a brand?” can be a tough question to ask. Many companies cannot seem to answer the question in a straightforward manner.

Walter Landor, well known in the advertising industry, said, “Simply put, a brand is a promise. By identifying and authenticating a product or service, it delivers a pledge of satisfaction and quality.”

Walter summed it up nicely, but today it can mean so much more. Today, it can be also seen as “A collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer.” This is exactly what you want to create online.

In March 2010, I spoke at the South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive Conference in Austin, Texas. The topic was “How to Score a Job” using social networking. The room was full of job recruiters. They shared that they put a heavy emphasis on applicants’ online presence. By online presence, I am essentially referring to how active one is on the Web with personal websites, blogs, published articles, activities on programming forums, and so on. One recruiter went as far as to say that, when hiring for technical positions, he would ignore applicants who although fully qualified, lacked the online presence that someone with their skills should have. If you’re a Ruby on Rails programmer, there’s no better way to show your passion for the framework than by blogging about it, publishing tips and guides, or simply helping others work with it. Companies can easily see that, which definitely helps during the interviewing and selection process.

Alternatively, having an online presence can pose a negative. People often find false comfort in privacy and security settings for the various networks, and post content that can reflect negatively on a brand. Putting up pictures of the night’s drunken escapades or venting about a coworker may not bode well for business the next day. Online presence is simply the act of being online. By having ways for people to search and find you online, you establish a presence.



SXSW is a series of films, interactive festivals, music festivals, and conferences that take place every spring in Austin, Texas.



Related Questions

- ➔ 4. How do I develop my brand strategy? **Page 13**
- ➔ 7. Am I reflecting my brand? **Page 22**
- ➔ 10. How do I brand my online identity? **Page 34**
- ➔ 76. Do I still need a business card? **Page 214**

Action Items

- ➔ Visit every site on which your brand has a presence and clean up any content that may be deemed negative or controversial by others (unless you want the controversial image).
- ➔ Immediately after setting up your profile on a social network, visit the privacy settings and customize them to what works best for your needs.



3. What Are Some Successful Brands?

Regardless of whether you are a person, a small business, or a big business, you have one thing in common: you're a brand. You want your brand to be successful and well known. This section looks at what some big brands have done to expand their online presence using social media.

Starbucks

Starbucks coffee chain (see Figure 1-1) likes to post what it calls “freshly brewed tweets” to its Twitter following of more than 1.3 million. If you look at the number of tweets that this brand does, you might notice a certain trend. What you see is a large number of engaging replies and mentions to its community almost every day. Starbucks has a strong reputation for being engaging and talking to people on Twitter. It doesn't just sell coffee.

Starbucks understands what it means for a brand to engage with its customers. All too often brands use Twitter to “shout” or spam their followers with relentless sales talk and ads—all the while without caring to respond to mentions or direct messages by their followers. Sure, Starbucks does post the occasional promo or new offer, but the brand's use of Twitter is mainly to connect intimately with fans and customers.

The online presence that Starbucks has developed reflects its offline brand. It listens and has caused people to start conversations about the brand, and that results in brand loyalty and revenue.

Ford

Scott Monty is the head of the social media movement at Ford Motor Company. He is what some consider the main “driving force” responsible for adding an entirely new dimension of social media savvy to this historic and world-recognized brand.



FIGURE 1-1: Starbucks connects with its fans and customers.

Not only does Ford engage on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, it has taken social media into the real world. The Ford Fiesta Movement (see Figure 1-2) is a campaign aimed directly at “Millennials,” the driving youth born between 1979 and 1995. This campaign consists of 100 “trendsetters” who basically kept a Ford Fiesta for six months and blogged or talked on social networks about their experiences with the vehicle. YouTube video applications to take part in this campaign were accepted and generated so much positive buzz that Ford initiated the Ford Focus Movement only one year later. With campaigns such as the Ford Fiesta Movement and Ford Focus Movement, Scott has changed the social media game.

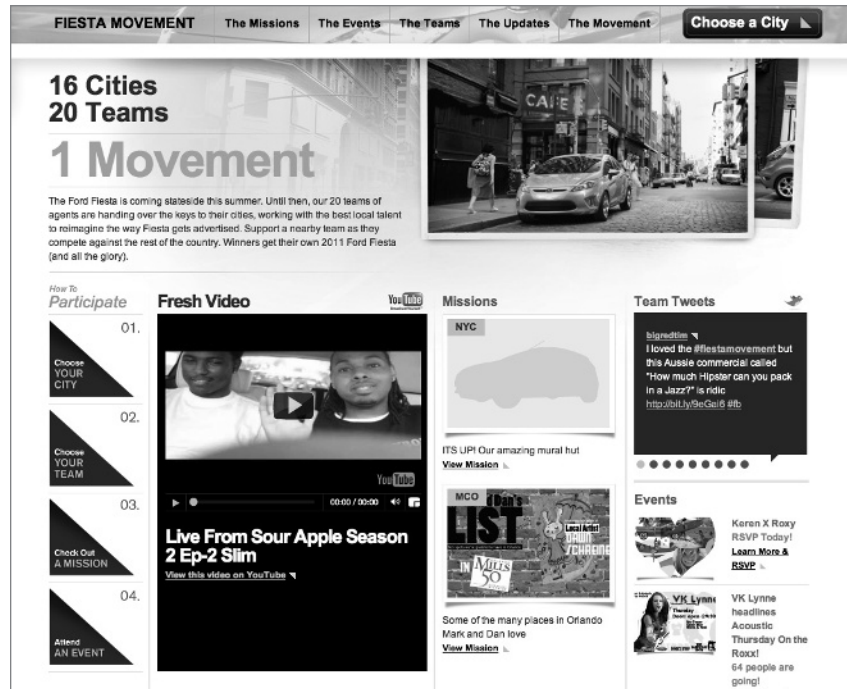


FIGURE 1-2: The Ford Fiesta Movement campaign

By doing these online/real-world campaigns, Ford enables its brand to become, well, more human, in a way. The brand engages with customers, evokes people's emotions, and takes part in conversations.

Dell

Dell has a lot of Twitter accounts (see Figure 1-3)—I do mean a lot. Something like more than 90. You might think that with that many Twitter accounts, its social media movement would be a mess. That just is not the case. Many key people at the company are tweeting about the day-to-day activities and what their division is doing, from Chairman and CEO Michael Dell to support staff like @richardatdell. Dell continues to gain advocates through Twitter because it's not just coupons and exclusive promos it tweets about. At the heart of the company's huge network on Twitter is a focus to keep the conversations about its brand going. The key to its success is engagement with its customers on a personal and human level.



FIGURE 1-3: Dell segments its social media efforts to help ensure that they reach every possible consumer need, from customer service to technical support to general outreach.

Dell earned more than \$3 million in revenue thanks to its strong Twitter presence in 2009.

Comcast

Bill Gerth is the man running Comcast's Twitter account at @ComcastCares. I know this because, well, it is listed right there. Oh—and in February 2011, I had a personal Dell experience where I turned to Twitter for help...or, rather, to vent.

Unable to communicate my need and issue to the customer service representative, I tweeted to express my unhappiness. Within a minute, @ComcastCares saw my Tweet. He quickly found the service ticket and reviewed the case and the breakdown in communication I had with the CSR. He contacted me, fixed the problem, and most important, he saved my account. See Figure 1-4.

Even though Comcast is a huge cable operator and broadband Internet service provider, it “gets” social media. Why? Because, as you can see with my own personal case, it isn't too big to pay attention to customers and their issues.

FIGURE 1-4: Comcast's social media support team has worked hard to transform a negative brand sentiment into something seen as very positive in the social space.

Frank Eliason was the original man behind @ComcastCares, and it is largely due to him that Comcast has developed such a positive brand sentiment within social media. He worked with his team to take a company known largely for having a negatively perceived brand, and created such a customer service presence online that Comcast is now viewed as one of the most socially respected.

Southwest Airlines

In 2009, on my way back home to California from Austin, Texas, I had a delayed JetBlue flight. Wanting to know how long the delay would be, I approached the counter. Getting no straight answer for whether it was

10 minutes or 10 hours, I went to Twitter for a little customer support. Having a Twitter conversation with @jetblue (see Figure 1-5) went well at first. That was until it did not get back to me on Twitter for an hour. Within that time frame, it seems Southwest Airlines was watching the conversation I was having with JetBlue and decided to join in.



FIGURE 1-5: JetBlue Twitter Conversation

Southwest quickly offered me a quick-and-direct flight home from Austin. Not only did it attempt to steal business from JetBlue using Twitter, it also created a huge buzz by doing it—with more than 200 retweets about it, numerous blog posts, and case studies.



Rule of Thumb Always be careful about what you say and do online. Even if you think you are deleting, it is always out there.



Many of the examples listed here show how customer service can succeed in social media. Other ways to use social media are marketing, PR, and general outreach.



Related Questions

- 42. What should I tweet about? **Page 120**
 - 48. What should my fan page be about? **Page 141**
 - 52. How do Facebook “likes” help me? **Page 150**
 - 77. Why does what I do in the real world matter? **Page 216**
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Action Items

- Study other successful brands online and listen to what they have to say online. They can act as guides in your mission to develop your brand's online presence.
- Check out your competitors and see what they are doing online. Note what works for you and what doesn't.

4. How Do I Develop My Brand Strategy?



Defining your brand is the first step to develop your branding strategy. Your brand definition can serve as your measuring stick in evaluating any and all marketing materials and strategies. You need to ask the following key questions to help define your brand:

- What products and services do you offer? Define the qualities of these services and products.
- What are the core values of your products and services? What are the core values of your company?
- What is your mission?
- What is your specialty?
- Who is your target market?
- Who do your products and services attract?
- What is the tagline of your company?
- What message does your tagline send to your prospects?



Rule of Thumb Consider your target audience when answering each question.

By answering these questions, you can begin to create a personality or character for your brand that represents your products or services. What is the character like? What qualities stand out? Is the personality of your brand innovative, creative, energetic, or sophisticated?

Using this personality, you can then begin to build a relationship with your target market. How does that personality react to a target audience? What characteristics stand out? Which characteristics and qualities get the attention of your prospects?

The Four Cs: Clarity, Consistency, Continuity, and Creativity

Successful brands of all types have the following four characteristics: clarity, consistency, continuity, and creativity.

CLARITY

Your audience is bombarded with thousands of messages every day, and for yours to break through the clutter and have the desired impact, you need to be clear about what you want to say. You need to answer the question, “What single idea should someone remember from engaging with you?” Are you an expert in accounting? Travel? Discounts? Being a mom? Assuming that you can only tell someone one thing about yourself, product, or service, exactly what would it be? Now, focus on that; highlight that single thing, and you have clarity. Avoid the temptation to try to tell everyone everything.

What action do you want the reader, viewer, or listener to take? Should they visit your website, call you, or stop by the office? Never assume that they will know what to do or what you want them to do.

When you combine a clear message with a clear call to action, you dramatically increase the odds of success. And clarity is simple—give your audience a reason to take action and give them an action to take. Clarity leads to success.

CONSISTENCY

Brand consistency is important in marketing and social media. You need to communicate messages in a way that doesn’t detract or wander away from your core brand proposition. For example, a single logo is always used in a similar way on all social networking sites and with similar typeface, color, and design styles so that everything visual is interlinked and has a link back to your home page. A network is like a member of the same family, supporting and even looking similar to all the other members in the family. Your brand needs to have its own unique “look and feel,” which enables a person to recognize it as belonging to your brand, making it unique.



A home page of a website is the page displayed if you simply type in the fully qualified domain name of the site in the address bar of your browser and press Enter. For instance, when you type in www.cnn.com and press Enter in the address bar, you go to CNN's home page.

It is about ensuring that all the messaging of all networks have the same look and feel—that it all “looks” consistent.

Brand consistency has one massive advantage, which is recognition. With recognition comes familiarity. With familiarity comes trust and confidence. Also, if done correctly, consistency brings clarity and purpose that consumers buy into. They can become loyal. Often people don’t like “new”—and it has been widely reported that before consumers purchase a product, on average, they need to be exposed to a brand 17 times. Seventeen times is a tremendous amount, so it’s essential that when potential customers come across a “brand message,” they know straight away which brand is communicating to them. This can be done only with consistency. If consistency is not applied, and the message and design are not defined, consumers might mistake one brand with a competing brand, which could then mean they associate the impression with another company. This means a business potentially loses customers and may even help its competitors if a consistent “look” and tone are not achieved.

The unique “look” of your brand might evolve slowly over time, but your core message should never actually change. Take, for example, Apple computers. Since its brand’s conception, its brand proposition was to supply advanced, quality, great looking, and high-performing computers. This message has never changed; however, the way it has communicated this over the years has changed because the way people consume and interact with brands has changed. This has led to consumer recognition and then trust and loyalty from its customers.

The issue is that brand consistency often takes many years to master before it can start to work for you. This means you need to think long term. Leading brands are normally leading because they have had many years of consistency behind them and they have had a long-term goal for their branding, which has been consistent. The trick is to have in place a clear idea of your brand.

Those who manage marketing and communication efforts as a series of individual projects rather than a campaign often overlook consistency in brand strategy. Consistency means that you deliver the same message across all channels: your website, Facebook, Twitter, and all others.

If the message you want to deliver is that you are the best and most-unique used car dealership in the industry, you need to sell it! Use every opportunity to remind your audience that you are the best in that industry. Quickly your clients and future clients will start to believe that message.


CONTINUITY

Like consistency, continuity helps to ensure that the brand message is properly portrayed throughout all the different ways consumers can come into contact with the brand. Marketing efforts are more than just online efforts; they also deal with everything offline such as the name, logo, business materials (letterhead, business cards, and so on), email signatures, website, calls to action, and sales materials.

Continuity in messaging helps bring consumers from point to point without losing understanding of what your brand is trying to say. Every piece of your brand should strive to communicate a continuous message.

CREATIVITY

Although last, creativity is by no means the least important. A brand message should capture the attention of its potential consumers. Following the lead of other brands can be useful in terms of generating ideas, but the most successful social media campaigns often come from the brands that step out of the box. Being creative in marketing and messaging can help to reach consumers previously marked as unreachable.



This type of creative branding addresses all four Cs: clarity, consistency, continuity, and creativity.



Related Questions

- ➔ 16. What should I use as a website address? **Page 62**
 - ➔ 18. Is a logo important? **Page 66**
 - ➔ 88. What does a social media strategy look like? **Page 244**
 - ➔ 97. How can I build influence? **Page 258**
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Action Item

- ➔ Document your strategy and include it in your general marketing or business plan. Every person on the team should know what the strategy of social media is so that there is no possibility of conflict or issue.



Importance

5. What Is My Brand's Objective?

Critical to effective brand management is the clear definition of the brand's audience and the objectives that the brand needs to achieve. What are the objectives that you hope to achieve with your brand? Is it to offer customer service? Is it to retain customers? Is it to get customers? Maybe it is to drive brand awareness?

Your brand should be composed of the brand's personality, image, core competencies, and characteristics. The impressions that you make and the words people use to describe your brand to others are the basic framework of your brand.

With a strong brand, you build credibility and more influence on your market, and you can motivate customers and clients to purchase from you. If done correctly, you will be looked at as a thought leader, not a follower.

By defining your objectives with specific timelines, it is easier to develop a plan of action to achieve those objectives. By defining your objectives, you can map out a plan for how to achieve these objectives. For example, your objective is to position yourself as a thought leader in insurance. How can you go about doing this? You can:

- Have members of your team speak at trade shows.
- Schedule lectures at professional group gatherings within your industry.
- Write and publish regular blog posts.
- Create a website to host and share knowledge.
- Incite discussions via social media such as on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn.
- Answer questions on Quora to show your expertise.

After you determine your objectives, the next step is to build and develop your brand strategy by listing how, when, and what you are going to do to accomplish and meet your brand's objectives.



Rule of Thumb Your actions online should all be made with brand objectives in mind.



Related Questions

- ➔ 1. Why do I need a personal brand? **Page 2**
- ➔ 4. How do I develop my brand strategy? **Page 13**
- ➔ 10. How do I brand my online identity? **Page 34**
- ➔ 97. How can I build influence? **Page 258**

Action Items

To determine your brand's objectives, document the answers to the following questions:

- ➔ What is it that you want your brand to offer people?
- ➔ What do you want others to know and say about your products or services?



Importance

6. Who Is My Target Audience?

Your value proposition must be relevant to your target market. This means your target market must be clearly defined. It's not uncommon for a business to need to refocus and revisit what it's targeting, especially if it is not clearly identified in the beginning stages of business.

You need to find the right balance when defining your target market so that your audience can recognize that you are talking specifically to them. This often requires companies to narrow their target market.

Why Is Your Target Market Important in Branding?

Regardless of what your brand is missing, gaining the devotion of your target audience is necessary to reach those objectives.

To achieve your brand marketing goals, you need to know your target market inside and out. This requires conducting a market analysis. This market analysis must be as in depth as possible, providing you with all the data you need to effectively reach your target. By knowing your target audience, you can be confident in the steps to take to connect with that audience.

The power of your brand relies on your ability to focus. That is why defining your target market can help to strengthen your brand's effectiveness. The best way to do this is to conduct an informal market analysis of your target market and write a target audience summary for your brand.

Conduct Your Informal Market Analysis

Make your study as complete as possible. Use the Internet to conduct research. You can also read news stories related to your target market. This can help you to narrow down your target by interest, demographic, and common trends.

Following are some important questions to ask that will help you through the process of completing this analysis.

- Who is your target audience?
- Where is your target audience located?

- What do audience members think about your current brand?
- What would you like your audience to think about your brand?
- How will you attract them to your products or services?
- Who else is competing for their loyalty and devotion?
- Are you targeting business or consumer sectors?

Interacting with your target market doesn't stop at asking questions. Engage with your prospects in other ways, too. Read their blogs and comment on them. Give them a call. Set up an appointment to go talk to them. Interact with them via other social media tools. Listen to what they're saying. Make yourself known to them. You never know when a simple conversation will lead to a long-lasting, mutually beneficial working relationship.



Rule of Thumb Your target market should be on the social networks on which you want to have a presence.



Related Questions

- 41. How do I increase my Twitter following? **Page 117**
- 49. How do I get people to like my fan page? **Page 143**
- 62. What are contacts and can I have too many? **Page 172**
- 91. How do I figure out who my key influences are? **Page 248**

Action Item

- Using a spreadsheet application, list the different demographics that comprise your target market and the ways you are planning to reach out to them. You can use this spreadsheet as a foundation for a statistical dashboard to track your ROI later.



Importance

7. Am I Reflecting My Brand?

Branding is your identity in the marketplace. Is yours saying what it should? Your company image is about the appearance of your packaging. What is your company image saying to the marketplace?

Packaging always either has a negative or positive influence on the purchaser. A negative impression can detour a potential customer, just as a positive reaction can influence a customer to buy. A time to pay special attention to your packaging is when you are in the launch of a “new” brand. If you’ve already built a strong brand that others recognize, often people may not pay as close attention to the packaging.

How can you package your brand so that it is an integral part of your business and represents a strong identity? Keep in mind that I am not speaking of packaging as a traditional box that contains a product, but as a vehicle that reflects your company’s brand and image. Packaging can be judged and represented by the following common business tools:

- Business cards and stationery
- Website
- Email address



Rule of thumb Be careful what you post on your social networks; nothing goes unseen.

What image are you putting across social networking sites that you use every day? What do people say about your company? Take the time to look at how your brand is perceived.

What are your business cards and stationery saying? Are they saying you are strong, you are confident, you are a thought leader, and you offer unique services? Or do they reflect an image that says you are flimsy and not dynamic and you will try but cannot guarantee continuity?

What does your website say about your company? Does it reflect professionalism and clarity? Does it show viewers that you respect

and care about them? Or does your website confuse viewers, project an untrustworthy image of your company, and ultimately drive potential customers away?

What does your email address say about your company? Does it suggest your role in the company, is it easy to remember, and does it say something about you and your business? Or does it project a meaningless or generic emptiness? If you use the email address `funandsexy@aol.com` to email people from your accounting business, it is time to get a new one.

Lastly, are you (or your team) reflecting your brand properly? Every word and action made by someone on your team can affect how the public views your brand. If you have people from your team on Twitter that make it known they are a part of your brand, you really want to make sure that expectations are properly set, in writing, so that there aren't issues later on. This is all a part of your social media strategy. The strategy should include your brand's "do's and don'ts" so that everyone involved understand what is okay and what is not okay to post online.

This doesn't just apply to Twitter. LinkedIn, Facebook, any social outlet that a team member can be on is subject to public scrutiny. If Jane from Accounting goes out with her friends on Saturday night, you may want to be sure she understands that posting drunken pictures on her Facebook page, which by the way happens to indicate that she's a part of the ABC Brand network, is not going to be okay on Monday morning when she gets to the office...unless, of course, your brand specializes in bachelor/bachelorette parties in Vegas.

As you can see, all these things speak volumes about your image and either strengthen or weaken your brand. Your image is all in the packaging. Would potential clients take a second look, or is your message getting lost? If you thought these things were not worth the investment or didn't matter, you were wrong. Clients and customers make both subconscious and public assessments of your company based on these things and that customer appraisal says much about your business, your attitude, and your priorities.



If you or a member of your team has a personal account on Twitter, you might want to include a disclaimer on your background or bio that indicates your thoughts and postings don't reflect those of your employer or company.



Related Questions

- 5. Why is my brand's objective? **Page 18**
 - 77. Why does what I do in the real world matter? **Page 216**
 - 95. How often should I update my strategy? **Page 254**
 - 98. How can I keep my social media efforts interesting? **Page 261**
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Action Item

- In the social networking world, you need to build a solid reputation. As an example, JetBlue does a lot of its customer support through its Twitter account. After helping someone, it always makes sure it thanks people for following its account on Twitter and flying. Doing something like this is a great way to build your reputation.