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CREATING AUTHORITIES, ONE BOOK AT A TIME

Branding Small Business FOR DUMMIES®

Special Edition

**Making
Everything
Easier!**

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Your expert guide to
the dos and don'ts
of branding small
business



Raymond Aaron

www.UltimateAuthorBootcamp.com

Foreword

I arrived on the shores of America as a teenager with little English and few dollars. I learned the language, but more so, I learned how business works. I learned about branding, marketing, positioning and all the other aspects of entrepreneurship that prove to be helpful in business and life.

I launched some businesses and I bought into others. They flourished. I found myself combining classical economic principles with my own flavor of business awareness. That new set of thoughts became my unique intellectual property and my businesses grew beyond what a boy from a foreign land could have ever dreamt. I am blessed and grateful.

Now, I have the privilege of serving on the board of corporations publicly listed on the New York Stock Exchange. I'm the president of an extraordinary university in North Carolina. I've been inducted into the Horatio Alger Association for Distinguished Americans. I list these credentials not to self-aggrandize but rather to simply state that certain principles work, really well.

Recently I met Raymond Aaron, a speaker, author, adventurer and all-round creative and honorable gentleman. I found him to be an authentic teacher of real values and accepted him into my coaching program. He eagerly devoured my ideas and both used them in his own businesses and also taught them to his students around the world. He most keenly was fascinated by my ideas of branding. He quickly realized this as the link he was missing – one link that had propelled me to my business achievements and, without it, had held him down to only strong business growth, not spectacular.

I enjoyed his childlike amazement at my ideas and became even more happy to support and guide him. Soon he became so proficient that he began teaching branding around the world and rose to be accepted as a “For Dummies” author of this very book.

I Salute Raymond's branding achievements for his own companies – but most particularly because he has truly grasped the spiritual requirement to pass on these powerful ideas to others through this book, his workshops and speeches. He is proudly teaching people how to write a book to both create and polish their brands.

So, dear readers of this book, be prepared to be rescued from the Sea of Sameness into your race down the River of Relevant Differentiation towards the success you desire and deserve. I view this as sacred work, as a pact between the generations – I help Raymond and he helps you. Then, in turn, as you thrive, please pass on these wonderful ideas to the next eager students of yours. Enjoy and learn from the principles presented in this book. They work. They are now yours.

Dr. Nido Qubein
President
High Point University
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Introduction

Branding is an incredibly important tool for creating and building your business. Large companies have been benefiting from branding ever since people first starting selling things to other people. Branding made those businesses big.

If you're a small business owner, you probably imagine that small companies are different and don't need branding as much as large companies do. No. The truth is small businesses need branding just as much, if not more, than large companies.

Perhaps you've thought about branding, but assumed you'd need millions of dollars to do it properly, or that branding is just the same thing as marketing. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In this book you'll find out why branding is so essential for every business, why you can't afford not to have branding and how to create and build a strong brand that will more than pay for itself.

Marketing is the engine of your company's success. Branding is the fuel in that engine.

How This Book is Organized

Part 1 begins with the basics of branding, especially as it may be a new concept to you.

- ✓ **Chapter 1** defines branding and explains the characteristics of branding that make it so essential to businesses regardless of size.
- ✓ **Chapter 2** shows how branding builds the kind of loyalty a company can't do without.

- ✓ **Chapter 3** takes your hand and walks you through the branding process, providing tips on what's important in branding and how to create your own brand.

Part Two reveals important information about building a very successful brand that even some of the large companies don't know.

- ✓ **Chapter 4** focuses on how to make and keep your brand strong and powerful.
- ✓ **Chapter 5** shows you how to avoid the biggest branding mistakes that small businesses make.
- ✓ **Chapter 6** exposes the ten most common myths about branding.

To make the examples in this book understandable to you, most of them are about brands from large companies. Please be reassured that all the principles apply equally to small businesses everywhere. There are, of course, many examples of small businesses too.

Icons Used in This Book

You'll find little pictures in the margins called icons. They're meant to call your attention to information I believe is especially helpful to imprint on your brain.

<Tips>

Tips are just what they sound like, little asides that are especially useful bits of information.

<Warning>

This icon represents those things I strongly suggest you avoid.

<Remember>

When you see this icon, please read carefully. This is the stuff I really don't want you to forget.

<Real Life>

Sometimes my experience has been so helpful that I'd be remiss not to share it with you. This icon just gives you a heads up that what you're reading is about something I learned directly from the source.

Part 1

The Ins and Outs of Branding Your Small Business

In This Part ...

Ready to get started branding your small business? I hope so, because I'm excited to introduce you to the ins and outs of branding your small business. This part of the book starts with the basics and explains exactly what all the mumbo jumbo about branding means to you and your business.

You can't have a successful business without attracting new customers and turning them into loyal cheerleaders for your products and services. Chapter 2 explains how branding helps attract the right people to your business. You'll also learn how to build a long and happy relationship with them.

The last chapter in this first part of the book outlines the things you need in order to build a successful brand. It also gives you a roadmap for creating a brand for any type of small business.

When you're finished with Part 1, you'll be ready to start creating a great brand of your own.

Chapter 1

Grasping Branding And How It Can Benefit Your Business

In This Chapter

- *Definition and characteristics of branding
 - *Branding in a small business
 - *The cost of branding — or not branding
-

In the old days, salespeople were a big part of the selling process. They recommended one product over another and laid out the reasons why it was better. Salespeople had credibility because they knew about all the products and customers often took the advice they had to offer.

Today, consumers control the buying process. They shop in big box stores, super-sized supermarkets and over the Internet — where there are no salespeople. Buyers now get online and gather information beforehand. They learn about all the products available and look to see if there really is any difference between them. Consumers also read reviews and check social media to see if both the company and the product are reputable. In other words, they want to know what the brand is all about.

It used to be: “Nothing happens till something is sold.” Today it’s “Nothing happens till something is branded!”

This chapter explains what a brand is, what the process of branding is about and what branding is for a small business.

Defining Branding

Branding is the science and art of making something that isn't unique, unique. Branding in the marketplace is the same as branding on a ranch – on a ranch, it's used to differentiate the cattle from every other rancher's cattle (because all cattle look pretty much the same). In the marketplace, it's what makes a product stand out in a crowd of similar products. The right branding gets you noticed, remembered and sold. Or should I say bought, because today it is all about buying, not selling.

Branding is the promises you MAKE and the promises you KEEP. If you're always late, that's your brand.

Defining a Brand

A brand is a proper name that stands for something. It lives in the mind of the consumer, has positive or negative characteristics and invokes a feeling or an image. In short, it's a person's perception of a product or a company.

When all goes well, consumers associate the same characteristics with a brand that the company talks about in its advertising, public relations, marketing and sales materials. Of course, when a product does not live up to what the company says about it, the brand gets a bad reputation. On the other hand, if a product or service over-delivers on the promises made, the brand can become a superstar.

A product with a first name

Most products are more or less just like their competition. Toilet paper is toilet paper, milk is milk and a grocery store by any other name is still a supermarket. High quality drinking water is available from just about every tap in the Western world and it's free, but people pay good money for it when it comes in a bottle.

Why? Branding is why. Branding makes some bottled water more special than others. A branded product has a personality,

a first name, and last. It's not just bottled water, it is Evian. It's not just a cleaning product for your house, it's Mr. Clean.

The “memorable” factor

A great brand name is memorable and easy to remember. It is usually represented by an icon or logo, most often visual, like the Nike swoosh or the distinct font on a can of Coca Cola.

A specific color can also represent a brand. Coke is red, while Pepsi is blue. UPS is brown. Using a color aids consumer recall and helps give a brand its personality. Audio icons are used less often, but can be quite memorable, like AOL's “You've Got Mail.” Advertising taglines can serve as verbal icons, but are best used in conjunction with a visual.

Very often a person and a brand become synonymous. The late Steve Jobs did a particularly spectacular job (no pun intended). I will always think of Apple when I see a tall, thin man on stage in a black turtleneck, jeans and running shoes.

Understanding the Characteristics of Branding

There are four key characteristics of branding that make it so integral to the marketing and purchasing process.

Branding differentiates you from others

Strong branding makes you better than your competition. Even if your product is absolutely the same as every other product like it, branding makes it special. Branding makes it the first product a consumer thinks about when thinking about making a purchase.

Branding also makes a product seem popular. Everyone knows about it, which implicitly says people like it. And, if people

like it, is must be good. That is, of course, unless it's known as a bad brand, in which case everybody knows it's bad.

Branding makes you trustworthy

Every aspect of your brand gives potential customers a feeling or comfort level that they associate with you. The more powerful and positive that feeling is, the more easily and more frequently they will want to do business with you and, indeed, will do business with you.

When you have good branding, you are a known, not an unknown. When something is unknown, it is a risk. Will it work well? Is it worth buying? Those are not questions that people ask themselves if branding is strong. After all, they feel they know a well branded product. Even if they've never used that product before, it has a reputation. Other people must be buying it so it must work well, taste great, etc.

In this case, familiarity can breed intent, rather than contempt. Of course, your product has to live up to what you say about it or it will become known for the wrong things.

Branding makes you worth more money

Most of the time, people will pay more for a well-branded product than they will for an unbranded one. They may say they won't, but they will. They do it all the time. Even those people who feel perfectly comfortable going for the unbranded or store-name toilet paper are apt to pay a lot more for the better-branded peanut butter or soft drink. The stronger your branding, the more likely people are willing to spend that little bit extra because they believe you are worth it. A box of one pound of Godiva chocolates costs about \$40; the same weight of Hershey's Kisses costs about \$4. The quality of chocolate is not ten times greater. The reason people buy Godiva is that the brand Godiva means "gift" whereas the brand Hershey means "snack". Obviously, gifts cost more than snacks.

Branding pre-sells your product

In the buying age, people most often make the decision on which products to pick up before they walk into the store. The stronger the branding, the more likely people are to think in terms of your product rather than the product category. For example, people are as likely, maybe even more likely, to add Hellmann's to the shopping list as they are to write down simply mayo. The same is true for soda, ketchup and many other products with successful, strong branding.

Plus, once a shopper gets to the shelf, the right packaging, colors and logo provide a quick reminder of what product to grab. Coca Cola does this perfectly as the Coke cans are so much easier to spot on the crowded shelf than Pepsi.

Branding in a Small Business

Big companies spend millions of dollars on advertising, marketing and public relations (PR) to build recognition of a new product name like Yahoo or Google. They get their selling messages out to the public using television, radio, magazines and the Internet. They can even throw money at damage control when necessary. The strategies for branding are the same in a small business, but the scale, costs, and a few of the tactics change.

Your brand name has to work harder

The name of a small business can mean everything in terms of branding. It should work harder for your business than you do. It's the first thing a prospective customer sees and how they will remember you. A brand name has to be memorable when spoken and focused in its meaning. If the name does not represent what consumers believe about a product and the company that makes it, then that brand will fail. In building your product's reputation and image, less is often significantly

more. Make sure the name you choose immediately gives a sense of what you do.

Large corporations have millions of dollars to take a meaningless brand name and make it stand for something. Small businesses don't, so it's important to use words that really mean something. You don't need to be boring. In fact you should strive for the opposite, just be more to the point. Plumbers, for example, would do well setting themselves apart with names like The On-Time Plumber or 24/7 Plumbing. The same is true for electricians, IT providers or even marketing consultants. There are plenty of other types of business that are so general in nature they just don't work hard enough in a business or product name.

<Tip>

Don't just use your own initials or name and, for goodness sake, don't name your company after your kids.

The Internet is your main playing field

Thank goodness for the Internet because it has leveled the playing field for small businesses as nothing else has been able to do. With a website and a strong brand, anyone can find your business regardless of its size. Social media makes promoting your brand especially affordable.

Sidebar

Branding Concerns for Your Business

- ✓ Branding is not just for your products. People want to know that the company involved is reputable and will treat them properly.

- ✓ Extend products, not brands. You can't make a brand stand for two things at once. If people don't think it makes sense for you to produce it, they won't buy it from you. (If you want some real life examples of how to do it wrong, check out Chapter 3.)
- ✓ When you're branded and you screw up, you screw up big. It's easy to get egg all over your face. Remember New Coke. Also remember Tiger Woods; his lifestyle choices hurt him considerably because he was branded not just as a great golfer but as a "nice man". If a hockey 'bad guy' had an affair, practically no one would care. It's all about branding.
- ✓ If you make it tough for clients to get a refund, your brand will definitely suffer, even if you make the greatest products in the world.
- ✓ Treat all your customers with respect. Their feelings matter, especially when you realize that YOUR brand lives in THEIR minds and hearts.

Chapter 2

Building Your Brand with the Branding Ladder

In This Chapter

- * Branding Doesn't Happen Overnight
 - * Brand Loyalty Isn't Enough
 - * Your Customers Are Your Best Salespeople
-

Even if you do everything perfectly the first time (and I don't know anyone who does), branding takes time. How much time is not just up to you, but you can speed things along by understanding the different levels of branding, as well as the business and marketing strategies that can get you to the top.

This chapter is about the value of building customer loyalty, how you can have an incredibly loyal customer base and why having a committed group of loyal customers can increase your business exponentially – and wildly decrease your costs.

Introducing the Branding Ladder

Moving through the levels of branding is like climbing a ladder to the top of the marketplace. The Branding Ladder has five distinct rungs and, unlike stairs, you can't take them two at a time. They have to be taken in order and some businesses will spend more time on each rung than others.

You can also think of it in terms of a scale from zero to ten, something you might be more familiar with. Everyone starts at zero and, if you climb the ladder properly, you can end up at

12. That's right, as you'll see, there is a very special rung at the top of the ladder that can take your business over the top.

The Branding Ladder	
Brand Advocacy	12/10
Brand Insistence	10/10
Brand Preference	3/10
Brand Awareness	1/10
Brand Absence	0/10

Rung 1: Living in the void called Brand Absence

Your business, in fact every business, starts at Brand Absence. That means you have no brand whatsoever except for your own name. An electrician called Bill Smith will name his company "Bill Smith, Electrician." Plumbers, lawyers and real estate agents almost always use their own names. They are all making the same fatal flaw. They don't think of their company name as their brand. They think of it as just their name. It's as if each of them is saying, "I don't have a brand. I'm just, you know, Bill Smith."

They also suffer from using the death word: "a". When you say: "I'm a Realtor", you are revealing to the world that you are an interchangeable pawn, an indistinguishable nail in the bin, no different from any other Realtor. I branded one young woman so that she tells people: "I'm the Realtor who gets you into a home larger than you thought you could afford." Now she is branded. She is special. She is different. You are beginning to experience what branding is all about.

Ninety-seven percent of businesses live on this rung of the Branding Ladder. They earn far less than they want to earn, far less than they should earn and far less than they would earn if they did exactly the same work under a real brand.

If you're one of that 97 percent, every time you want a sale, you've got to sell and beg. You don't call it that, of course, but that's what it is. You give a discount, an incentive or a free download in order to make a sale. Well-branded companies don't beg, they don't give something for nothing and they charge more than those in Brand Absence.

On a scale of one to ten, Brand Absence is, of course, zero. That's the worst place to live and obviously the most difficult entrepreneurially. The good news is that the only way is up.

Rung 2: Achieving Brand Awareness

Brand Awareness is a good first step up the ladder. Actually, it's really good, especially since 97 percent of businesses never get there. You want people to be aware of you. When person A speaks to person B and says, "Have you heard of The 24/7 Plumber?", you want the answer to be "yes".

On that scale of one to ten, however, Brand Awareness is a only a one. It's better than nothing, but it's not that much better. Although it's good to be known, being aware of your brand doesn't mean that someone is interested in buying it. Coca Cola drinkers know about Pepsi, but they don't drink it. I know that there is a country called Iceland, but I have no desire to go. Knowing about it just isn't enough.

Rung 3: Becoming the preferred brand (Brand Preference)

Getting to Brand Preference is definitely a real step up. It means that people prefer to use your product or service rather than that of your competition. They believe there is a real difference between you and others and you are their first

choice. It is a crucial branding stage for parity products like bottled water and breakfast cereals, not to mention plumbers, electricians, lawyers and all the others.

Brand Preference is good, but not good enough

People may prefer one brand over another because it is even just a little bit better, they like the color or shape of the packaging or they had one good experience with customer service. All of that's good, but it may not be good enough all the time. The thing is, when the reason for preference is not sufficiently meaningful, customers are only somewhat invested in using their preferred product. On the one to ten scale, Brand Preference just rates a three because it is an all-other-considerations-aside kind of preference. Customers are not going to go out of their way to obtain a preferred product if there is a viable alternative close by.

Car rental companies represent a perfect example of why Brand Preference may not be enough. When someone lands at an airport and needs to rent a car on the spot, he or she may go straight to the preferred rent-a-car counter. If that company has a car available, it's a sale. However, if all the cars for that company have been rented, the person will move to the next rental kiosk without much thought because one rental car is just as good as another. Okay, maybe one company has a shuttle bus while another lets you fill out the return paperwork right in the parking lot, but none of the companies have special cars or services that make that much of a difference and their prices are all roughly the same.

Exerting Brand Preference needs to be easy and convenient.

Very few people go to a second or third supermarket just to find their favorite brand of bottled water. Similarly, a shopper may prefer one store over another but, if both stores sell the same products, he or she will often go to the closest store even if it is not the better liked one. The reason for staying nearby does not need to be a dramatic one — the shopper may simply be tired, on a tight schedule or not in the mood to travel.

Clearly Brand Preference is better than Brand Awareness but, it is less than half way up the Ladder.

Rung 4: Making it you and only you (Brand Insistence)

When your customers are so committed to your product or service that they will not accept a substitute, you have reached the top rung of the Ladder. This is the place all companies strive to reach and it's called Brand Insistence.

Brand Insistence means that someone's experience with a product in terms of performance, durability, customer service and image has been sufficiently exceptional to have earned that product or company an incredible level of loyalty. If the product isn't available where the customer is, he or she will literally not buy something else. Rather, the person will look for the preferred product elsewhere. Can you imagine what a fabulous place this is for a company to be? This is the best of the best, the perfect ten out of ten, the whole ball of wax.

The perfect example of a company with brand insistent customers is Apple.

Its users don't just think, they *know* in their heads and hearts that anything made by Apple is technologically-advanced, user-friendly and just all-around superior. Committed to everything Apple, Mac users won't even entertain the thought that there might be positive attributes to a PC.

Apple people love everything about their Macs, iPads, iPhones, the Mac stores and all those Apps. When the company introduces a new product, many of its brand insistent fans actually wait in line overnight to be one of the first to have it. Steve Jobs is one of their idols.

<Real World>

I must confess that I'm a zealot. I am indeed one of those Apple super-fans. If my computer died and somebody gave me a PC, I wouldn't take it. I would rather take the time to go to an Apple store and buy a new Mac than get a PC for free. If this were to happen while I was on a business trip, and there wasn't an Apple store in the city I was in, I would drive to another city because I insist on Apple computers.

Starbucks also lives at this level of loyalty

Starbucks customers typically think of the brand in a totally different way. It's not just about the taste and strength of the coffee, but the entire customer experience. The atmosphere, the lingo (Tall, Grande and Venti) and the socially-conscious image are all part of the brand gestalt. In short, Starbucks is an experience, a planned trip that you make with the intent to stay a while. Every other coffee shop or donut place is just a stop on the way to somewhere else.

There is one big potential problem with Brand Insistence

It can be lost much more quickly than it is achieved. Brand insistent customers have such high expectations that they can be disillusioned or disappointed by just one bad product experience. You also have to consistently reinforce the positives as insistence can fade over time. Even someone who has bought and re-bought a specific brand of car for the last 20 years can decide it's just time for a change. That's how fickle the world is.

At ten out of ten, Brand Insistence might seem like it is the top rung of the ladder but it's not. There is actually one thing that's better and it involves getting your brand insistent customers to keep polishing your brand for you.

Rung 5: Getting your customers to do the work for you (Brand Advocacy)

Brand Advocacy is the highest rung on the ladder. It's better than ten out of ten. It means that you have customers who are so happy with your product that they want everyone to know about it and use it. Think of them as uber-fans. Not only do they recommend you to friends and family, Brand Advocates practically shout your praises from the rooftops, interrupt conversations among strangers to give their opinion and tell everyone they meet how fantastic you are. Most companies

can only aspire to this level of customer satisfaction. Apple is one of the few large corporations in recent history that has Brand Advocates all over the world.

Brand Advocacy does five extraordinary things for your company:

- ✓ **Provides a level of visibility that you couldn't pay for if you tried.** Brand advocates are so enthusiastic they talk about you all the time and reach people in ways general media and public relations can't. You get great visibility because they make sure people actually listen.
- ✓ **Delivers free advertising and public relations.** Companies love the extra super-positive messaging, all for free.
- ✓ **Affords a level of credibility that literally can't be bought.** Brand advocates are more than just walking testimonials. They are living proof that you are the best.
- ✓ **Provides pre-sold prospective customers.** Advocate recommendations carry so much weight that they are worth much more than plain referrals. They deliver customers ready and committed to purchasing your product or service.
- ✓ **Increases profits exponentially.** Brand advocates are money-making machines for your business because they increase sales and decrease marketing costs.

For these reasons, Brand Advocacy is 12 out of 10!!

Moving Up the Branding Ladder

Most small businesses end up stuck on the bottom rung in Brand Absence, but it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, the smaller the niche the more easily and quickly you can establish yourself as the leader at what you do.

You move up the Branding Ladder with every WOW you create. You move down the Branding Ladder with every unWOW you create. Something is a WOW or unWOW according to your customer – not according to you.

Four Ways To Brand Yourself

Now that you are getting interested in being branded, you will likely want to know how to do it. There are many ways, but I'll introduce four ways here to get you started:

- ✓ **Branding by Association** – this way involves being seen with and hanging out with people who are very much higher than you in your particular niche. My niche is wealth-seekers. So, I hang out with and/or have photos with Sir Richard Branson, Steve Wozniak (co-founder of Apple), Eric Trump, Donald Trump, rock star Gene Simmons, rock star Brett Michaels, author Jack Canfield, mayor Rudy Giuliani, Dr. Nido Qubein, Dr. John Gray, Bob Proctor, and so many others. I show those photos in my stage presentations. I post those pictures on my Facebook account. I have them framed on my wall and standing on my desk. I mention such names in conversations (being careful to not just blatantly name-drop). You know 'big' people; don't hide that you know them. Get photos. Publicize those photos.
- ✓ **Branding by Achievement** – this way repurposes your previous achievements. Lance Armstrong's speaker fee sky-rocketed when he won Tour de France seven times. You may not be a world-class athlete like him, but you have achievements. What are the achievements of mine that I mention? I've been in the Canadian Who's Who every year for over decades; I've written two *Chicken Soup For the Soul* books; I was one of only 40 teachers chosen to be filmed for the blockbuster hit movie *The Secret*; I completed Polar Race, a 350-mile month-long foot-race to the North Pole, and did so at age 62; and lots of other accomplishments. They work their way into my presentations, into my conversations, into my Facebook wall, into my tweets, etc. you have achievements; don't hide them. Use them to up your brand.
- ✓ **Branding by Testimonial** – this way makes use of the testimonials that you receive but have likely never used. I have lots of testimonials, but more important those testimonials are easy to find. For example, go to www.RaymondAaronReviews.com to see a blog of user-uploaded testimonials. Thousands of them. Leave a

testimonial there yourself about how much you are enjoying this book. Also, consider establishing such a website yourself for others to upload their testimonials.

- ✓ **Branding by WOW** – this way uses a powerful concept of creating WOW experiences that will be discussed in great detail throughout this book. For now, it is important to know that the easiest and most certain way to WOW people is to tell them that you've written a book. To learn more about writing a book of your own, go to www.BrandingSmallBusinessForDummies.com.

<real life>

Here's one way I WOW people using one of my books. I used to tell people I was a professional speaker and it would end the conversation. They had no idea how to proceed from that point. Now, my conversations start totally differently.

Stranger: Hi, what's your name?

Raymond: Raymond.

Stranger: What do you do?

Raymond: I help you double your income doing what you love.

Stranger: WOW!! Do you have a card?

Raymond: No, I have a book.

Stranger: A book? I just want a card. What's your book?

Raymond: Double Your Income Doing What You Love. May I give you an autographed copy?

Stranger: WOW!! Yes, for sure. WOW!!

Applying the fundamentals

- ✓ **Know what your customers really want and expect.**
- ✓ **Do what you say you will.** Do it to the best of your ability. Do it consistently.
- ✓ **Over-deliver everywhere and every time you can.** Be ready to go the extra mile.
- ✓ **Remember that what you do is more important than what you say.** Making promises and not keeping them

can turn even Brand Advocates into Brand Detractors and Brand Detractors tend to make a lot of negative noise on social media sites. It is always better to over-deliver than to under-deliver or not deliver at all. For example, give yourself some slack. If you normally deliver in two days, telling a customer it takes a week gives you a cushion in case something goes wrong. Plus, delivering earlier than promised makes for a nice WOW.

- ✓ **Consider the customers' entire experience.** Literally walk in their shoes, from the moment they approach the door of your retail business or click on the home page of your website. Look at every detail of the buying process to insure that it is user-friendly and designed to make even first time customers your Brand Advocates. The smallest things can make a huge difference.
- ✓ **Treat your customers as if they are always right.** Your intent is to make buyers happy so they will become repeat customers and actively recommend your services. Even if you can't do what they want you to do, let your customers know you understand why they are upset and offer to do what you can to make up for the fact that you can't do as they ask.
- ✓ **Don't set policies that make life tough for customers.** This often costs valuable customers. Companies don't understand the make-the-customer-happy concept at all, or feel their business has a captive audience. Everyone has a few horror stories about how they were mistreated by an airline or store, caught in the maze of automated customer service or told "we can't do that, it's against company policy." These situations are called unWOWs and they are as undesirable as they sound.

<Warning>

Every unWOW moves your company further down the Ladder of Wealth. Every time a salesperson is rude, or pricing and return procedures are customer-hostile, it's like saying "don't buy our products anymore"

<Remember>

- ✓ **Live your brand.** Every image, written word, policy and action either supports or detracts from your brand. As Michael Eisner, former CEO of Disney says, "A brand is a living entity - and it is enriched or undermined cumulatively over time, the product of a thousand small gestures."

Harnessing the power of WOW

A WOW is the pleasantly unexpected, the equivalent of going the extra mile. There's never traffic along the Extra Mile! What a great way to brand yourself and set yourself apart.

Every time you WOW a customer, you're on the way to creating a brand advocate. Even the smallest WOW can make your business grow like gangbusters. People tell their friends about WOWs, bloggers rave about WOWs and each WOW moves a customer up the preference ladder until he or she is advocating for your product or service.

A WOW can't be just for show, it has to be related to what the business does and be meaningful to its customers. Free shipping used to be a wonderful example of a WOW, although it has been used so often that it's almost a prerequisite, especially around the holiday shopping season. A free month of cable or cell phone service to say, "We're sorry there was a problem" to a disgruntled customer is certainly a WOW. Even just saying the words "we're sorry" can be a WOW, but only if the problem is fixed immediately.

Everyday WOWs

In these days of low grade customer experiences, just getting something right can be a WOW. Check-out lines that move quickly, a no-questions-asked return policy and focused service delivery times ("We'll be there between 12 and 1" instead of "sometime between 9 and 5"), coming when you say you will, having a part in stock ... all of those can be small WOWs that add up to Brand Advocate customer.

Usually it takes just common sense or common decency. Think about an airline passenger trying to change a ticket, or getting re-routed because of a storm. Can you imagine the

impression he would get if, just once, an airline employee said “I understand how frustrating this is for you. You’re right.” Instead, passengers just get the run-around and, consequently, they bad-mouth airlines every chance they get.

If it happens even just a few times, customers become ex-customers and frequent buyers turn into only-when-I-absolutely-have-to customers. Plus, you’ll tell everyone you know about the horrible experience. If you have a blog, you’ll tell a thousand people. If you happen to be on TV or write an article for a newspaper, you’ll tell a million people. That’s what happens every time you unWOW somebody.

<real life>

I teach people how to WOW clients and prospects by writing a book – not a book to win a literary prize, not a book to sell a million copies, rather a book that will create and up your brand. My fitness instructor client Al Barga wanted more male clients through branding, so I told him to write a book. He has developed a fitness program for men so powerful that you can eat whatever crap food you want and look ripped. His book title is CHEESEBURGER ABS: Eat What You Want And Look fabulous. Check out my branding by book-writing idea www.BrandingSmallBusinessForDummies.com.

The Apple handbook

Apple provides the textbook case study – its customers are extraordinarily committed to singing the company’s praises whenever they can. Apple advocates love everything Apple. They believe the company stands for great quality and innovation. No self-respecting Mac user would ever consider buying a PC, and every one of them will happily tell a PC user what a mistake it is not to own a Mac. Mac advocates literally come armed with a list of what’s right about Mac and wrong about PCs.

The love these Brand Advocates feel isn’t limited to products. They are into the entire Apple experience. All the company’s branding elements reinforce the positive customer perceptions —white Macs, white stores with smart and friendly technicians, wonderful customer service, products that are always the first of their kind, plenty of bells and whistles and hundreds of thousands of Apps. Plus, Apple understands what

these techno-savvy customers want and fulfills their unexpressed needs before they even know they need something.

Since all Apple products synch with one another, customers can create their own Apple world; there is never a need to go outside the franchise. Advocates consider Steve Jobs a personal idol, are proud of being Apple groupies and can't imagine being any other way.

You can do this for your own company simply by creating more and more WOWs to move your clients continually up the Branding Ladder to Brand Advocacy.

The Death of a Brand

Martha Stewart was branded as a woman of honor and common sense. She was not sent to jail for insider trading; she went to jail for lying about her insider trading. Catching a woman of honor lying was the death of her brand, at least for 5 to 10 years.

Catching Tiger Woods cheating on his wife when he stood for everything nice was the death of his brand, at least for 5 to 10 years. He lost tens of millions of dollars of endorsements.

Blackberry was not just a great smartphone, it so dominated the industry that it was as if it were the only smartphone. It was so addictive that its users created a heroine-style nickname: Crackberry. Yet, RIM failed to innovate and let Apple crush Blackberry with its innovative iPhone.

Blockbuster was a giant company that apparently did not notice that iTunes was more convenient than renting movies from a physical store.

Once a brand is in decline, there are only three outcomes:

- ✓ The brand dies (like Blockbuster)
- ✓ The brand can be revived after a long enough period of laying low so that people forget or forgive. This will be the case with Martha Stewart and Tiger Woods. Some

transgressions are so severe that no length of time will be enough; an example is O. J. Simpson.

- ✓ The brand can be quickly revived by distracting customers through branding something else. An example is the revival of Chrysler at the time when the US Government guaranteed a \$100 million loan to save the company. The Board of Directors brought in branding guru Lee Iacocca from Ford to be Chrysler's new CEO. Mr. Iacocca was responsible for creating the best brand that Ford ever created: The Mustang. He knew he could not polish the decaying brand Chrysler, so he distracted the American public by branding himself. He was the centerpiece of all TV commercials. People liked him personally so they bought Chrysler cars and trucks.

Chapter 3

Taking Branding Seriously

In This Chapter

- * Creating a strong, hard-working brand
 - * Building and maintaining a powerful brand
 - * Extending your brand successfully
-

Branding can literally make or break a small business, but it almost never gets the attention it deserves. With all the other daily responsibilities small business owners shoulder, branding often falls to the bottom of the to-do list. This puts small business owners at a serious disadvantage because, no matter how important those other tasks are, they really aren't more important than branding.

Small companies are functioning under the grave misconception that working on their products is more important than working on their brand. That's simply not the case. Branding has a more positive effect on your business than the quality of your product. I would prefer to live in a world in which product quality was more important than branding; but alas that is not this world.

This chapter is about taking branding seriously. It shows you how to create, build, and maintain a strong brand that turns your customers into Brand Advocates.

Establishing a company or product name, deciding on the visual components that will represent your brand and determining the most motivating and meaningful marketing message will probably take some time, especially if you do it on your own. It's important to have a clear and concise picture of what your company does and how it fills prospective clients' wants and needs.

<Tip>

If you are having trouble getting started with branding, consider working with a Business Coach. Such a coach will help you identify what's most important, get the creative juices flowing and keep you focused on your unique message.

Choosing a Brand Name: Five Rules to Remember

Naming your brand is one of the most important branding steps. Since small businesses don't have the millions that large corporations do to spend on marketing, advertising and public relations, it's important to make your company or product name do a lot of the heavy lifting.

<real life>

My book-writing client Jill Voss intended her book to create and increase her brand. She is single and likes being single. She wanted to teach workshops to help other single women stay single, if they wished to. She chose her name (the title of her book) very well. Jill's book title is *Jill Without Jack*. What a powerful name. You too can have a powerful name (title) and a book and a brand – all in one by writing a book. Check out www.BrandingSmallBusinessForDummies.com.

<Warning>

You may be tempted to simply use your own name. Unless you've already achieved superstar status, don't make this mistake. Naming the business after yourself just makes you another something. Joe Smith Plumbing, for example, doesn't give you any advantage versus John Doe Plumbing.

Rule #1: There are no rules

Real rules would be a huge deterrent to great branding. If everyone followed the same strict guidelines, all companies and products would sound and look alike. There would be no way to differentiate a company from its competition. Can you

imagine how confusing the soda aisle in the supermarket would be if all the colas used red cans?

The goal in branding your business is to be unique. Large corporations can afford to spend millions to build awareness of seemingly nonsensical names like Google, Yahoo and Amazon, but small businesses need their names to work hard without consumers having to put too much time into figuring out what they mean.

Rule #2: Be brief

Many companies make a huge mistake by dumping all their product benefits into their brand names. It makes for a mouthful and is just too much for someone to remember. Possibly the worst example of this is: Johnson & Johnson's Clean and Clear Essential Foaming Facial Cleanser. People say Coke, they say CNN, but they don't say Johnson & Johnson's Clean and Clear Oil Free Foaming Facial Cleanser.

Women's moisturizers are a prime example of an entire category gone wild. Olay this, Olay that and Olay this-plus-that. Vaseline Intensive Care Sun Tan Lotion is another terrible brand name.

A brand name must be easy to remember, so the shorter the better. Not everyone can find one, two or three magic words that say it all, but keep trying until you're sure your business name is as concise and powerful as possible.

- ✓ **Be creative.** Play around with different keywords and phrases. Try to have fun with it and you'll find it much easier to think outside the lines.
- ✓ **Combine words.** Make sure that their meaning is immediately clear. Great examples are LinkedIn and U-Haul.
- ✓ **Don't worry about grammar.** Punctuation marks like & and \$ can replace written-out words. Abbreviations don't require periods. Capital letters can appear in the middle of words. You get the idea.

<Warning>

Stay away from using @ as it will give you trouble when using the same name for your website and email.

- ✓ **Try using numbers (especially 1 instead of one) when combining two words into one.** The worldwide convenience store chain 7-Eleven was so named because the store was open from 7 am to 11 pm. At the time, being open for so many hours was unprecedented and filled a real consumer need.

Rule #3: Avoid being generic

The more specific your name, the better you'll be attracting people who really want what you offer. Plus, you'll sound different from everyone else in your field. A generic sounding brand name is useless. In a health food store, practically every brand is called Nature's Answer, Nature's Cure, Nature's Abundance. And from the spoken-word point of view, you can't tell whether it's a brand name or a description. Brand names are bad if they sound generic.

Rule #4: Be descriptive (kind of)

Don't try to fit everything about your company into your brand name. You don't need to spell out every word and you certainly don't want to use a whole sentence. Your brand name can hint at something without spelling it out. Think about adjectives and ways to add a benefit to your brand. Brainstorm ways to give a clear picture of what you do or what customers will get from using your product.

- ✓ **Find your niche or make one.** Marketing, for example, can encompass a lot of different specialties including advertising, search engine optimization, media buying, direct mail, etc.
- ✓ **Learn what keywords (the words people enter into a Google search) and phrases your potential customers use.** The free version of the Google Adwords tool is

great for deciding which words will mean the right thing to the most potential customers.

- ✓ **Be results-oriented.** Work with the words that describe what your customers want to have happen when they use your product or service.
- ✓ **Focus on what you do that your competitors don't.** Whether you emphasize a unique service, an unusual product benefit or the niche in which you compete, find something that makes you stand out.

Rule #5: Make it memorable

A brand name must grab someone's attention and be easy to say as well as remember. While it's true that someone may see a company name typed out on the web and business cards, it's not a great brand unless it's catchy enough to be remembered and talked about it easily. Coke, Nike, CNN, The NY Times, the White House and Buckingham Palace are examples of memorable brand names that are instantly recognizable when spoken.

<Real Life>

I worked with a company that was weakly branded. It was in the business of helping its client companies get noticed by Google. The company was "AJ Media", where AJ is the entrepreneur's initials. The name was a huge so-what. It gave no benefit. It did not stand out. It did not stand for anything. Here is the progression of stages I went through to eventually arrive at a great brand for him.

I first thought of a name that used a catchy new word: "BizUp Media". It was certainly cute and gave the hint of a benefit of improving a client's business. But, it just wasn't specific enough.

Finally I arrived at "Page One Marketing" which was perfect – it gave the distinct impression that a client company would rise to the first page in a Google search.

If you wanted to be noticed by Google, would you rather retain AJ Media or Page One Marketing? That's the power of a brand. Are you getting the branding point? It's the same company – but Page One will get clients more easily and likely be easily able to charge more than AJ.

To learn from me in person, come to one of my branding workshops offered around the world. Get your free tickets at www.BrandingSmallBusinessForDummies.com.

Getting It All Right

Blockbuster is a brilliant name for a movie rental company. The term is specific to the movie industry, implies that the company is the best and gives the impression that every movie you rent is going to provide you with a wonderful experience. It's of course too bad that the Board of Directors didn't notice iTunes.

Budget is a great name for a rental car company because it sounds like you are going to get a better price. Even when you buy things on a budget, you still want quality.

Contrived names can make for great brands. Lexus isn't really an English word, but it does a good job of implying luxury. Intel plays off the word intelligent. It is a much better name than Intelligent Chip would have been (then it wouldn't have sounded like a brand, just a description of the generic word chip). Choose your name carefully.

<Real Life>

My Australia clients, Jorgen and Dr. Hanne Christensen, were struggling in their business of helping financial planners make more money. They just weren't getting opportunities to offer their workshops. On my advice, they branded themselves through writing a book, entitled LOVE YOUR CLIENTS AND PROFIT. With this new tool, their business has a clear edge over competitor workshop providers. Want to write your own book to increase your brand, or make one in the first place, check www.BrandingSmallBusinessForDummies.com.

Being Visual

Logos, colors and typefaces are powerful branding tools that make immediate and positive associations for your company. Golden arches mean McDonald's just about everywhere in the world and Twitter's blue bird is recognizable both online and offline. Robert Kiyosaki, the author of *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, is all about purple and, in America, brown is the color of UPS. Without trying very hard, I bet you can picture the font of several newspaper mastheads or your favorite store. That's exactly what you want for your own business. You can certainly identify the fragrance of KFC. Colors, fonts, aromas, images, logos – these are all part of a brand.

<Tip>

Once you've chosen the key visual elements for your brand, be faithful to them. Love them. Respect them. Don't leave home without them. In other words, be consistent. If you don't take any pride in identifying your brand, you can't expect anyone to think that you're special. Products and companies that aren't seen as special are unbranded and have to fight for everything they get.

<Remember>

Consistency is critical to visual branding. Whether it's on your website, in your store, or on your business cards and letterhead, be true to your visuals and they'll be true to you.

Picking colors

Although the decision on colors can be very personal, there are five key guidelines to follow when choosing your brand's color palette.

1. **Be different.** Think Apple white versus PCs black or Pepsi blue versus Coke red. The point is to stand out on the shelf, at the front of the store or online.
2. **Be bold.** Don't be afraid of dark or bright colors as long as they work well online. A designer can integrate your

main color scheme into a website that pulls people in and is easy to read.

3. **Focus on one color.** If you want color to be a distinctive part of your branding, focus on one color and use it for maximum effect. That's not to say it has to be the only color in your graphics, just the focus. One of something is always easier to remember than several of something.
4. **Respect your brand's personality.** Colors come with their own connotations, some of which differ depending on what part of the world you're in. In Japan, for example, white was the traditional color to wear to a funeral, not to a wedding.

Each color has a psychology behind it.

Red	Energy, excitement, sexuality and pleasure
White	Purity and divinity
Blue	Peace and calm
Black	Luxury
Purple	Royalty
Green	The environment

When it comes to picking the main color for soft drinks, Coke did a much better job than Pepsi. The difference plays a huge role in customers' perceptions of the products and may well be one of the major reasons that Coke has traditionally been the market leader. Think about it – when you drink a cola, would you rather have sexuality and pleasure, or calmness? It's no wonder that no one orders a 'rum and Pepsi'. When you drink alcohol, you typically don't want peace, you want pleasure.

5. **Make sure the colors you choose fit with customer perceptions of your brand.** Remember that their opinion is more important than your own.

6. **Pick from a broad spectrum of colors.** There are a lot of color choices so don't just stick with primary colors. Look at warm versus cold, bold and bright versus pastel and pretty or earth tones versus jewels.

Creating a logo

Create a design that uses a specially created font rather than a standard typeface. Examples include Coke, FedEx (look for the arrow hidden in the typeface) and Wikipedia. With its oodles of money, Google has actually made *changing* its logotype part of the Brand's personality. Of course, this is not a good idea unless you are actually Google.

A logo can also include a drawing or visual representation of something that relates to your company or the category in which you compete, to make a more immediate association for the customer. If you decide to do this, be careful not to be corny or old fashioned — unless, of course, nostalgia is part of your brand.

<Tip>

Your visuals and colors should work well together. Competing visual elements can be confusing and distracting. The goal is to reinforce your brand and make it easier and faster for consumers to understand exactly what you are talking about.

Writing a Tag Line

A tagline is a statement that summarizes your unique selling proposition (USP) or the benefit customers will get from using your product or service. The shorter the better, although there have been some notable exceptions like, "Fedex. When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight" and "Nyquil. The night-time sniffing, sneezing, coughing, aching, stuffy head, fever, so-you-can-rest medicine."

<Tip>

While clever taglines get remembered, the objective is to say something meaningful or establish yourself as a leader in your

market. When it comes to taglines, what convinces people is more important than what amuses them. If you can do both, great. If you can't, then convince.

Staffing for Serious Branding

Great branding requires attention. It can't be done casually.

<Real Life>

I learned about the power of customer WOWs from my coach. Once he had seen how WOWs could move his business up the Branding Ladder, he hired a Director of WOW. He told me that if I wanted something to happen in my business (like WOWing my customers), then I had better have someone in charge of doing that. Since that moment, I've had a Director of WOW in my company.

Having a Director of WOW

Every company needs a Director of WOW. Hiring one can turn your customers into Brand Advocates and dramatically increase your sales. I will never run a company without a Director of WOW.

Don't confuse a Marketing Director or a regular customer service representative with a Director of WOW. A Director of WOW must be empowered to:

- ✓ Fix unWOWs quickly. This requires the transactional ability and budget to react to problems that exist and correct them. It is a reactive and Left Brain position.
- ✓ Create WOWs regularly. This requires the transformational ability to foresee what will amaze people and create that experience. It is a proactive, Right Brain and very senior position.

Keeping track of what works and what doesn't

<Real Life>

In my company, every employee meets with the Director of WOW weekly to tell about the creative ideas they've imagined for improvement. Also, every staff tells the Director of unWOW immediately of problems they've noticed. Every WOW is recorded so we make sure it becomes policy and every unWOW is eliminated immediately. We have zero tolerance for unWOWs and keeping track of them ensures not only that they are handled properly but that they are not ever repeated.

<Remember>

Every unWOW takes you down the Branding Ladder and every WOW helps take you up another step. Don't let unWOWs build up or you're likely to end up with Brand Detractors rather than Brand Advocates. Detractors love to complain and can now bad mouth you to thousands on social media.

Looking at some specific WOWs

<Real Life>

My coach's ability to create WOWs is the reason why every one of his companies is extraordinarily successful. For example, he purchased an upscale bakery – Great Harvest Bread Company – and, instead of just creating great products, he also created great WOWs. One of them is quite extraordinary: there is a table on the customer side of the counter with free bread, butter and honey. Anyone who is hungry can eat. It's a very sweet service but, from a branding point of view, it's brilliant. For just a few dollars worth of bread a day, the company gets millions of dollars of publicity and a slew of new customers.

Six Prerequisites for WOWs

Since it is a Right Brain proactive skill required to create a WOW, you need some guidelines to help you. I have discovered that there are six prerequisites:

- ✓ BIG – The WOW must be big so that it has an impact on the recipient.
- ✓ UNEXPECTED – The WOW must come as a surprise.
- ✓ MEMORABLE – The WOW must have such an impact that the recipient will remember it. Only that which is remembered can be talked about later.
- ✓ POSITIVE – The WOW must be a positive experience.
- ✓ EXTRA – The WOW must be over and above the confines of the product or service itself.
- ✓ RELEVANT – The WOW must be relevant to the product or service in some way.

The obvious acronym to help you remember these six prerequisites is: BUMPER.

<Real Life>

A woman called a limo to pick her up from her home to take her to the airport so that she could attend my workshop in another city. At the airport, the driver took the bags out of the trunk, and the woman paid the driver. The transaction was officially over as far as the service of limo-driving was concerned. But, it hadn't even started yet as far as WOW experiences were concerned. Upon arrival at her destination airport, the woman received a text message which changed her life. It said: "Hi, it's George, your chauffeur. I've been following your flight on my iPhone App and noticed that your flight just safely landed. Have a great conference." She was so moved that she vowed to never use any other limo service again and to tell every friend who would listen. Notice it was not the \$100,000 limo car, not the expensive chauffeur uniform, not the polite was the driver handed the luggage to her at the end of the ride. No, it was the EXTRA. The 15¢ text message that raced that limo drive straight up to Brand Insistence and also Brand Advocacy.

Comprehending Brand Extensions

Once you've built a brand, you have to respect it. You have to understand that consumers see your brand a certain way. It means something to them. Everything you do either enhances the brand's image or dilutes it.

Defining an extension

Many companies looking to expand their business make a huge mistake when adding to their product line. It's totally OK to add a product. But, you may need to create a new brand for it instead of hoping that your current brand can do double duty. Extending your product line is good. Extending your brand may kill it.

Seeing the losers, and then the winners

Almost all brand extensions don't work

Extending a brand is very tricky and most people who try to do it fail. Rather than strengthening the perception of a brand, most of the time extending it does more harm than good. One problem is that a brand extension can change consumers' perceptions of the mother product.

- ✓ **Heinz:** Heinz Lite was a disaster when it was introduced. People didn't want to be told that the ketchup they love is a high-fat product. Heinz correctly extended its product line by introducing a low-fat ketchup, but they erred by extending the brand calling it Heinz Lite. Any other new brand would have been better – like Red Lightning. Hellmann's made the exact same mistake introducing

Hellmann's Lite. Although it still sells a low fat mayonnaise, it has never been a winner.

- ✓ **Campbell's:** This Company badly hurt the brand image of its soups by coming out with Healthy Request variations. This was an especially bad marketing decision because the company had spent millions of dollars on advertising and promotion that positioned the original soups as healthy. By introducing the new varieties, the company was basically saying that it lied about the core product.
- ✓ **Coors:** Coors makes beer and, for some time, advertised that the pure water it used to make beer was part of what made the beer taste so good. At one point, the company decided to sell Coors Water. It may have sounded like a good idea to the company but it didn't make sense to consumers. The name Coors did not say 'pure water' to people, rather it said 'beer'. So, what on earth does Coors Water mean? Unfortunately, to consumers it said 'watered down beer' or 'beer-contaminated water'. Coors spent a fortune marketing Coors Water but nobody bought it. It's a brand extension that failed in a big way.
- ✓ **Bayer:** Bayer is so successful at making aspirin that the brand and aspirin are basically synonymous. Once non-aspirin pain relievers like Tylenol and Advil became successful, Bayer felt it just had to compete. It came out with a line of pain killers called Bayer Non-Aspirin and the market place said, "I don't get it. If Bayer is aspirin how can there be a Bayer Non-Aspirin?" It just didn't make any sense. The product failed badly.

Diluting a brand is a big mistake

You might think the broader a brand is the more valuable it is, but it is usually the other way around. When you try to expand what a brand stands for you are likely to make it mean less. Here are some examples.

- ✓ **American Express:** Twenty years ago "American Express" stood for the American Express card. Having one was a big deal because not everyone could meet the income requirements. Then the company made a big mistake. It decided to introduce roughly one dozen new American Express cards every single year, including American Express

Optima, American Express Delta Sky Miles, American Express Optima True Grace, American Express Corporate Executive, American Express Optima Rewards Plus Gold, and so on. Now anybody can get an AmEx card and American Express is just another credit card company. In the last 20 years the market share for American Express has fallen from 27% to 18% because they extended their brand and, in doing so, made it mean less to consumers.

- ✓ **Levi Jeans:** Twenty years ago Levi jeans meant 'sexy'. If a woman was going to come into a room wearing Levi jeans, men would stop and wait. Then Levi extended their brand by introducing baggy, zippered, wide leg and many others. Bringing out those new looks under the Levi name didn't work and the company dramatically lost market share. Now Levi doesn't stand for anything; it's just another jean.
- ✓ **Oprah:** Oprah is loved around the world. A billion people knew what she stood for. Every time you watched her show, you got reinforced that she stood for authenticity, love, spirituality, honor, truth, wisdom, relationship. She is a brilliant host. She personally is transparent when she talks about herself. Then, suddenly, she dropped her show and started a network. Her error was brand extension: no one knows what OWN (the Oprah Winfrey Network) or Oprah stand for any longer. On the OWN network, you can watch movies that you could see anywhere. So, how is she different? Her brand extension hurt her brand. If you asked people, during the 25 years of her show, what Oprah stands for, they would effortlessly tell you. Ask people today and they no longer know what OWN or Oprah stand for. That's the problem with brand extension. If she had created a totally different brand, like The Integrity Network, there may well have been a totally different result.
- ✓ **Crest Toothpaste:** Crest made a similar mistake. There was a time when Crest was the undisputed market leader, so much so that there was Crest Toothpaste and there was anything else. Then Crest started to introduce brand extensions like crazy. The company made it all so confusing that, as a result, the leading toothpaste now is Colgate. Of course, Colgate has many of the same brand extensions, but it only markets Colgate Total so consumers walk into the store knowing exactly what to look for. They can choose whichever Colgate they want in the store, but they know Colgate Total.

Extending your product line works

If you want to come out with another product, don't extend the brand; extend the product line and introduce the new product as a new brand. Yes, it means building a new brand but it is much more likely to pay for itself than doing the wrong thing. Here are two examples of how it should be done.

- ✓ **Wrigley:** The world's dominant name in chewing gum, Wrigley, didn't bring out new products under the Wrigley name. Instead, the company launched new brands, each of which plays off the thing that makes it unique. There's Big Red, a cinnamon flavored gum; peppermint flavored Doublemint; fruit flavored Juicy Fruit; Spearmint; sugar-free Extra; a gum for people with dentures named Freedent (it doesn't stick); and a breath freshener called Winter Fresh. All are very distinct brands with different fonts and colors. All these are separately-branded products with no family similarity, and they all put their profits into the same Wrigley pocket. You probably didn't even know that they were all Wrigley products.
- ✓ **Time:** The company didn't introduce new magazines under the *Time Magazine* brand. Instead of *Time for Business* they came out with *Fortune Magazine*. The company's sports publication is called *Sports Illustrated*, not *Time for Sports*. The financial one is *Money Magazine* and their celebrity-watching magazines are called *People* and *Entertainment Weekly*. Each publication has its own format. They are different sizes and thicknesses and use different fonts for their logos. Since each appeals to a different target audience, Time as a whole has a bigger readership base than it might have if all these magazines fell under a brand name that stands for news. You see, since Time means 'news', what does Time for Money mean? Or, Time for People? Or, Time for Entertainment? Time extended its product line, not its brand. They did it right.

<Remember>

Extending a brand is usually wrong because then your customers no longer know what the brand stands for. Introduce a new brand rather than dilute your current one.

Product extension extends your product line. Brand extension kills your brand.

Brand contraction is the counter-intuitive winner

You can actually strengthen your brand and make more money by owning and servicing a specific niche rather than competing within the bigger overall market.

- ✓ **Starbucks:** Starbucks changed the definition of coffee shop. The term 'coffee shop' used to mean a diner-type place where you got a full breakfast or, maybe, lunch and of course coffee. All of those old 'coffee shops' were unbranded and most of them are now gone because Starbucks, the coffee shop that actually focuses on coffee, has changed your expectations about what a coffee shop is. Starbucks narrowed its focus and won.
- ✓ **Subway:** This company has built an incredibly profitable brand by offering only long narrow sandwiches. Who would have thought that the physical dimensions of a sandwich would make it successful? But, if every other deli in the world is selling sandwiches of any shape and you brand-contract to sell just a particular kind or size or style, then your brand becomes far more valuable.
- ✓ **Toys-R-Us:** Children's Supermarkets sold children's furniture and toys. A new president noticed that furniture took up lots more floor space than toys, didn't sell as well, and had a lower profit margin. So he got rid of furniture to focus only on toys. Well, if you are just going to sell toys, then the name Children's Supermarket wasn't appropriate any more. The company rebranded and brand-contracted as Toys-R-Us. Children's Supermarkets was a mediocre brand while Toys-R-Us is the leader in its market.

<Remember>

When you brand-focus and brand-contract, you have a greater chance of success. Everybody wants to extend their brand and they are all wrong. Those companies that create product

extensions under different brands are successful, as are companies that brand contract.

Being an exception to the rule

A brand name can be extended, with great care. Large corporations often conduct expensive customer research to understand exactly what a brand name means to its customers, as well as to determine whether that meaning can be successfully expanded to include other products ideas.

While we just talked about a Heinz brand extensions that failed, the company also provides an example of how to extend a brand successfully. Originally, the company only made ketchup. Great ketchup, in fact, that people loved and thought of as a high quality product. When Heinz tried to introduce a second condiment to the line (mustard), people didn't buy it. Consumers associated the name Heinz with ketchup and only ketchup. They expected Heinz products to be red, ketchup red in fact.

Heinz cleverly expanded the brand itself by adding "57 varieties" to the name. The company spent millions over a long period of time making consumers aware of the extended name. After that, people did buy Heinz mustard, Heinz beans, Heinz this and Heinz that. As long as the product fit within the concept of 57 varieties, people were willing to accept that Heinz made good tasting, quality products and bought them. Of course, the company never made 57 of anything. It started with ketchup and now makes thousands of products. This is a great example of extending the meaning of a brand.

Part 2

Advanced Branding Ideas

In This Part ...

I share some of the most shocking truths about branding and how they affect creating and building a superstar brand. Even many large companies don't know these ideas ... and they should.

Chapter 4

The Shocking Truths: Advanced Branding Ideas

In This Chapter

- * How branding really works
 - * Making branding even more profitable
 - * Understanding the true importance of branding
-

The basics of branding covered in Part 1 of this book provide a strong foundation on which to build a very successful brand. This chapter is for small business owners and managers who have already started the branding process. It focuses on protecting and growing a brand to superstar status.

Getting Your Brand Known

You create your brand, giving it a name, a look and the start of a reputation. The next step is to make your customers and prospective customers aware of your brand. Under the old selling strategy, you would introduce and build your new product with advertising, then maintain it with public relations.

What you say doesn't count

In the old days, companies used advertising to introduce their brands and people largely believed the ads they saw. Today the world is much more skeptical and people don't necessarily believe everything they hear or read. Branding is no longer about what you say; it's about what others say about your

products and services. Of course, you do need to promote your brand yourself (on your website, at shelf, etc), but be ready for consumers to make their own decision about your brand.

What they say is important

At this point, you're probably wondering how to get the word out in a way that people will believe you. Public relations is a better alternative to advertising when you are first building your brand. Translate your claims into editorial, often with a perceived endorsement, so what *you* say comes off as what *they* say. People then believe what's said because, if others are saying it, it must be so. With PR, it's as if what they are saying is what everybody is saying.

Here's an example. Xerox was the very first plain paper copier and the brand became gigantic because of how revolutionary and wonderful the product was versus the old thermographic technology. People were dazzled and word of mouth spread around the world. Today everybody has a plain paper copier and lots of companies make them, so the brand Xerox has outlived its specialness and the company has to protect it with advertising.

<Tip>

Launch and build your brand with public relations, but then protect it with advertising. No matter how interesting a brand is, it eventually outlives its publicity and its specialness and it has to be fortified with advertising. Advertising is wonderful if what you want to do is remind everyone about a brand they know and love.

That's what Coke and Pepsi do. They advertise everywhere because all they have to do is remind people about their brands. Then, if some other cola tries to break into their market, there is a fortress, fortified by a billion dollars worth of advertising every year, keeping the new cola out.

Making Your Brand Shine

Once your brand is out there, it must shine and, most definitely, shine brighter than any other brands that are even remotely similar to yours. There are several good ways to make this happen, like creating an incredible brand experience for your customers.

Comparing your brand to other brands doesn't work

There's also a really bad way to go about making your brand shine, which is to simply tell people that you're better than your competition. It's a marketing tactic that used to work in the old days, but doesn't do a bit of good in this buyer-controlled environment.

The truth is, if you say you're better people will challenge what you say. They simply won't believe you. If Coke says it's better than Pepsi, the first reaction is, "Oh yeah? Prove it to me." The same is true if Budget says it's better than Hertz or Buckingham Palace says it is a better tourist attraction than the Tower of London. People won't take your word for it, they want testimonials and think, "Prove it to me."

Leading a new category makes you shine

If you say you are better, people will challenge you and they won't believe you but, if you say you are the leader, they will know that you are better. When they know you are better, they will buy you. So you definitely need to become a leader.

Look at the market in which you compete and narrow your niche as much as you have to in order to become the leader in something. Don't worry about limiting the playing field because being the leader in your niche will provide a halo effect that impacts your entire market.

Real estate agents are great at making themselves leaders. They are experts at narrowing down, narrowing further and narrowing again until they end up with something like, “Mary McGregor, the number one female Realtor in residential listings in the SW1 area of London during the month of October 2012.” You need to do the same kind of thing for your brand.

Narrow as much as you have to, but make sure the niche you find is still full of eager buyers.

McDonald’s is the leader in fast food hamburgers but no one would accept that it is the leader in healthy food because people don’t go to McDonald’s for healthy food. When McDonald’s brought out a healthy line, it failed. They entered the wrong niche.

<Tip>

There are several powerful tools for branding yourself as a leader. Among the best are:

- ✓ Writing a book that showcases your expertise or knowledge of a category.
- ✓ Making videos for your website that allow your personality to shine along with your talent.
- ✓ Using social media to get your name, your face and your message out there so you can become someone people turn to for advice or knowledge.

<Remember>

Being the leader is a profoundly important concept in branding. If you compare yourself to others, people won’t believe you. But, if you are the leader, they will infer that you are better. After all, if you are the leader you must be better. If you are the leader you will thrive. If you are not the leader you won’t.

Making Your Brand Powerful: Owning a Word

When you become the leader, you become known and, once you're known, a very interesting thing happens— the marketplace assigns a word to you. That word does not come from your branding but encapsulates people's overall feeling about you and your brand. Here are some striking examples from the corporate world.

- ✓ **Apple:** The word that the world assigned to Apple is “cool”. Every time Steve Jobs stood up and introduced a new word like iPad or iPhone, the marketplace said, “That’s cool.” Blogs all over cyberspace announced that Apple has come out with a cool new product. The association between Apple and the word cool is incredibly strong. If you said to 100 people, “A company came out with a brand new product yesterday and it’s really cool,” 99% of those 100 people would guess that the company was Apple.
- ✓ **Luxury cars:** The marketplace loves to assign words to luxury cars. It assigned the word “prestige” to Mercedes and “ostentatious” to Rolls Royce. BMW is no less prestigious than either of those two brands but it’s known as a “driving experience”.

<Tip>

Take notice of what the marketplace is saying about you and your brand. Heighten that word in what you, your publicity and your advertising say because that word is powerful. That word is what makes people prefer your brand and advocate for your brand. Interestingly, the word (actually the phrase) that people assign to me is “You gotta see this guy”. For three decades that I have been teaching around the world, people have come up to me at my workshops to tell me that they have come because a friend told them “You gotta see this guy”. Because I know this, I always announce at my workshops that you should tell your friends “You gotta see this guy” so that their friends will come to my future workshops.

Understanding What a Brand Really Does and Doesn't Do

Branding is very powerful. It makes selling easier, generates more sales and profits, and increases your market share. It also does something absolutely amazing — it creates a new market niche based on what's different and special about your product or service.

Brands actually create new categories

As part of branding your product, your company or even yourself, you introduce a point of difference with phrases like 'the first', 'the original' or 'the only'. When you do so, you automatically create a new niche with you as its leader. When you create a market others will, of course, jump in but you will still be the dominant player. Here are some of the new categories that were born out of branding.

- ✓ **Tissues:** Handkerchiefs used to be very popular and everybody used them. Made of material, they went in the wash after being used and could be re-used over and over again. People were very happy with handkerchiefs. Then Kleenex introduced a disposable handkerchief and explained why it was better with the slogan, "Don't put a cold in your pocket." People understood, and wanted to protect themselves from getting sick. Suddenly, there was a new market niche (disposable handkerchiefs) which grew much bigger than the original market.
- ✓ **Apps:** Before Apple, there was no App market. People knew there were applications meant to be used with computers and smart phones but they were just tools and not sexy at all. Apple made up a new word just by shortening the generic word application. By their association with Apple, Apps became cool. People wanted them. Apps became big business and are now part of everyday life. Although other operating systems, like Blackberry and Android, introduced Apps of their own, Apple still has the dominant market share and the most

number of available apps. Software developers all want to have their Apps accepted by Apple.

- ✓ **Inexpensive cars:** People have always wanted to buy cars cheaply but doing so wasn't status symbol material until Volkswagen introduced the Beetle. It suddenly became very cool to drive a cheap car.
- ✓ **Pizza delivery:** Today pizza restaurants offer delivery, so it's hard to imagine that there was a time when it was not the norm. Back in the 1960s, some pizza shops offered delivery, but only during certain limited times. Domino's was the first to focus on delivery as part of its branding and established delivered pizza as a profitable niche which has since become a must-have service.

Brands don't expand markets

Although brands create new niches within a market they can't make overall markets bigger. Their magic lies in changing the product people want. Branding is all about getting people to pick one product versus another. Kleenex didn't get people to start using handkerchiefs; it just got handkerchief users to buy disposable ones. Consumers who weren't in the market to buy a car didn't suddenly decide they needed a car just because the Beetle became cool.

Considering Quality

Perhaps the most startling thing you need to know about branding is that the quality of your brand is far more important than the quality of your product. That's not to say that you don't need to deliver a good product because, of course, you do. But, if two products are of equal quality, branding will decide which one gets purchased. Even worse, inferior products outsell better products if the inferior product is better branded. This is a shocking thing to realize and it shouldn't be true, but it is true.

- ✓ **Watches:** Rolex costs much more than Timex, but the general public really has no idea if Rolex keeps better time. Even if Rolex does keep better time it's a matter of

mere seconds a year so who really cares. Two watches which keep time equally well – one sells for a substantially higher price because of its branding.

- ✓ **Cars:** Does Mercedes have significantly fewer mechanical problems than Ford? Is Hertz a better rental car company than Alamo?

<Remember>

You typically cannot tell product quality but you can tell brand quality, because you get to decide! What you think about a product *is* its brand.

The proof is in the Pepsi

About 30 years ago, Pepsi made a shocking discovery. In blind taste tests practically everybody preferred Pepsi over Coke, even though Coke dominated the cola market. The Pepsi Blind Taste Test was a major TV campaign to get Coke drinkers to try Pepsi. It failed. Why? The answer lies in the Pepsi *sighted* taste tests. When people could see the cola they were drinking, they chose Coke. You drink a cola only for its taste. Pepsi tastes better. You choose Coke. Why? Because Coke has a better brand. Even though people liked the taste of Pepsi better, they preferred the Coke branding. Of course, they said they picked Coke because of the taste but, as the blind taste tests proved, that wasn't their real reason. Cola drinkers like the brand of Coke better than they like the taste of Pepsi

The proof is in the packaging

Remember Beta and VHS. Beta was technologically superior. But, VHS won. Why? Because VHS had a better brand. If you'll recall, the VHS package was tall and slender. The Beta package was short and squat. People wanted tall and slender; they did not want short and squat. Shockingly, branding was the reason that a technologically superior product failed and its inferior counterpart won.

Most small business owners are doing something wrong

Business people regularly take courses to improve their skills, or continually try to make that better mousetrap, which means they are always working to improve their product. It's commendable, but misguided. What's wrong is that, in the real world, a better product doesn't count as much as a better brand. This truth is shameful. Better product should count a great deal. Sadly, it usually doesn't. The two previous examples of Pepsi and Beta prove that – superior products with inferior sales.

In principle, people want the better product to sell better, but that's not the way those same people buy. *Consumer Reports* magazine rates the quality of every type of product. It has concluded there is no relationship between quality and which products sell better. The magazine has also concluded that there is definitely a relationship between branding and sales.

Looking at the Role Mascots Play

One of the most exciting sub-aspects of branding is having a *brand mascot*. A brand mascot is a person or character that stands for or represents the product. Often they are illustrated or animated drawings, but some of the most memorable ones are played by actors. There are many truly superstar brands that are represented by brand mascots and using one is a brilliant idea in branding.

The most successful Brand Mascots are not just cute or loveable. They:

- ✓ Are often based on what the product looks like or does
- ✓ Invoke a likeable personality
- ✓ Add humor to products
- ✓ Represent the fulfillment of a brand's unique selling proposition
- ✓ Are kept current and relevant

The Four Cs of Brand Mascots

I have noticed that there are four characteristics of Brand Mascots and they can be summarized by the four Cs:

- ✓ Cartoonish
- ✓ Colorful
- ✓ Cheerful
- ✓ Consistent

As you read about Brand Mascots and as you see them on the packaging of products, notice that they all obey the four Cs.

Brand Mascot Characters

- ✓ **Ronald McDonald:** Ronald McDonald has been around in one form or the other since the early 1960s. He's all about kids and fun, which makes perfect sense for a fast food hamburger chain. (When was the last time you met a young child who didn't want to go to McDonald's?) Local franchises use Ronald McDonald at events and promotions to attract families with children.

Over the years, he has evolved to match cultural trends and, when used internationally, is made relevant to the pervading culture in some manner. In other words, the company keeps him relevant and parent-approved.

- ✓ **The Michelin Man:** Around since 1898, the Michelin Man is a living tire. Like Ronald McDonald, he has gone through evolutionary changes (as tires are improved). Over the years the Michelin Man has been tied to one product benefit or another, but that's not even necessary anymore. People just trust the Michelin Man and buy tires because of him. It's not related to a rational decision, it's related to branding. A survey of Frenchmen concluded that they buy Michelin Tires because they trust the Michelin Man. That's extraordinarily notable because the Michelin Man is, of course, just a drawing.
- ✓ **The Jolly Green Giant:** Created in 1925 for the Minnesota Valley Canning Company, the Jolly Green

Giant is fairy-tale based and was named after a variety of particularly large peas. Through the years, his character evolved into a friendlier and greener persona known for protecting and overseeing a valley where all types of exceptionally fresh and delicious vegetables grow (elevating the brand to differentiate what are basically parity products). The Jolly Green Giant was so popular that the company was renamed after him in 1973.

- ✓ **The Maytag Repairman:** A North American phenomenon, this brand mascot is an under-employed appliance repairman. He was not that bright and a bit out of shape. His shirt didn't fit well and he slumped at a desk that had a phone on it, a phone that never rang.

The Maytag Repairman hated the fact that the phone didn't ring. People loved the fact that the phone didn't ring. It was the company's way of proving how well their products worked. The character basically said, "I'm lonely. I fix Maytag appliances but don't get to go out on calls very much." Consumers got the message. They bought Maytag appliances because the repairman was underutilized.

- ✓ **Other examples:** Other brand mascots include Morris the Cat and Tony the Tiger. There's no logical explanation for why these characters continue to sell product, except that people love them and immediately recognize the association between mascot and brand.

Brand Mascot Celebrities

There are lots of celebrities that represent a particular product or service and, if people like or trust the celebrity, they buy the service. Priceline.com is a great example of a company that makes wonderful use of a celebrity. Reverse mortgage companies have celebrity endorsers that are respected and age-appropriate, like Alex Trebek, the beloved host of the American game show *Jeopardy* for decades.

Chapter 5

Unmasking the Biggest Branding Mistakes Small Businesses Make

In This Chapter

- *Why every company needs branding
 - * Branding is most successful when no one else is doing it
 - * Word of mouth is not enough
 - * Creating a brand on your own
-

This chapter is about why branding is more important for your small business than it is for larger ones. It also corrects major misconceptions about small businesses and branding.

Assuming Branding is Just for Large Firms

Most small businesses don't brand themselves and, as a result, do a poor job of standing out from competition. Without branding, a small business is just another something or other. A plumber is a plumber is a plumber. An IT company is just another IT company.

Being just another of something makes you interchangeable with every other business that does what you do. People need a reason to choose one company or product versus another. Without a reason, they might as well close their eyes and arbitrarily point their finger at any one business in the phone book.

Thinking Branding is Too Expensive

While it's true that large companies can afford to spend millions on building and maintaining a brand, it doesn't mean that great branding has to cost much. Identifying a meaningful point of difference, choosing a name, picking a color palette and creating a tag line are all things a small business can inexpensively do.

You don't need an expensive advertising campaign or a million-dollar website to have great branding

The best advertising and promotion for a branded product is free. It comes from Brand Advocates, those loyal customers who have been moved all the way up the Branding Ladder. (For a full explanation of the Branding Ladder, see Chapter 2). They have passed Brand Preference and even Brand Insistence and shout your praises from the rooftops.

There are expenses associated with branding, of course. They include building and hosting a website (something you need to be doing anyway), producing marketing materials and, doing some advertising. Some companies will also find that they need additional staff or outside support to insure that their customer service is phenomenal. If you do not have someone focusing on creating WOW experiences for your customers as well as eliminating unWOWs, you will want to appoint a Director of WOW and a Director of unWOW. For a small company, this is an item on a staff member's job description, not a full-time employee.

Promoting your brand doesn't

have to cost a lot of money

Social media is a great way to get the word out and, except for advertising on Facebook, is free. Online word of mouth from satisfied customers is also free and can give your branding efforts legs.

<Tip>

Not branding will actually cost you money in unrealized profits. Without branding you can basically expect to receive the same share of market as any other unbranded competitor. If there are ten electricians in a town, and none of them is branded, then each electrician can reasonably expect to get only about one-tenth of all the jobs. A branded electrician gives the people in town a reason to choose him over his competitors. Each time someone chooses the branded electrician over an unbranded one, the branded one takes share of market away from other electricians and can, therefore, expect to enjoy considerably higher profits.

Not Recognizing the Branding Edge

Since most small businesses aren't branded, people might question why they should bother branding. When one business is branded and all others are not, the branded business has an incredibly strong advantage.

The truth is, all businesses need branding but not all of them are smart enough to have it. If you have a brand and your competitors don't, you automatically become the leader in your market. The leader in a market gets most, if not all, of the business. If a new competitor enters the market, the branded business is protected and much less likely to lose new customers to the new entrant.

<Real Life>

A wonderful example is my clients Pamela and Dexter Montgomery, Realtors in Northern Virginia. For decades they did well helping their clients buy and sell real estate. Their own clients knew how they may be different, but no one else

did, so they weren't branded. I advised them to powerfully brand themselves the easiest way possible and that's by writing a book. They are now the proud co-authors of *The Book On Investing*. When asked "What do you do?", they used to give the unbranded answer: "I'm a Realtor". Now they give the branded answer: "I'm the Realtor who wrote the book on investing." People are always dazzled. And that WOW experience brands them and causes people to eagerly choose them over other Realtors. That's branding for a small business.

Placing Too Much Importance on Word of Mouth and Personal Referrals

Local businesses are especially likely to think they can thrive on regular word of mouth alone, but nothing could be further from the truth. While referrals from one person to another help a business get some new customers, they are way too passive to have a significant difference.

Branding harnesses the power of the web and social media

Social media is like word of mouth on steroids. One loyal customer can reach hundreds of people at a time on Facebook or Twitter.

Consumers searching online can find you if you're branded. That's so important because not everyone asks for or receives a personal referral anymore. The current culture drives people directly to the Internet to find what they're looking for.

If you're branded you will be perceived as the leader in your category and your name will jump into people's minds. If you're not branded, you're just one of the all others and will get lumped together on the last page of an internet search.

Word of mouth and personal referrals don't do anything to protect you from losing customers

Great branding builds the type of loyalty that keeps your customers from trying anyone else. Making customers say WOW builds Brand Insistence. Brand Insistent customers have no reason to try a competitor, even if the competitor is less expensive.

<Tip>

Word of mouth on the Internet is worth at least ten times more than a personal one-to-one referral. Online PR for a brand can pull in more new customers than unsolicited referrals can.

Believing You Can Do It on Your Own

Branding is about what other people say about your product or service, yet most small businesses smart enough to recognize the importance of branding try to do it on their own. It can't be done. A business gets to pick its name, its look and its unique selling proposition (what makes it a leader and differentiates it from other businesses). The rest is up to its customers, prospective customers and former customers.

Working with experts

Branding isn't unbelievably difficult but it's certainly not easy. Building a brand requires a deep understanding of your market and the type of people who make up your customer base. That ball's definitely in your court, but you also need to know about marketing, persuasion and the latest branding and business-building tactics. A coach can give you all of that. Working with a coach also helps you stay on track, set and

meet goals and, importantly, plan for keeping your brand shining long term.

<Real Life>

WOWing your customers on a regular basis takes focus and, as I learned from my own coach, having a Director of WOW can make a huge difference to your business. The truth is, you really shouldn't try to do everything on your own. It's not smart, it's not fun and it's certainly not profitable in the end.

Listening to your customers

People love to talk about their good and bad experiences. Encourage feedback and your customers will tell you what's important, what's working and, just as importantly, what's not going well.

- ✓ Listen to their suggestions
- ✓ Eliminate all the unWOWs
- ✓ Fix the things customers complain about as soon as you receive the first complaint
- ✓ Apologize immediately when appropriate and you're on your way to turn even unhappy customers into Brand Advocates.

Conducting consumer research before you change your product can be a very smart move. Customers will let you know if the change makes things better or just seems silly. Plus, people who use your product or services can make some brilliant suggestions about what they'd like that you're not doing. Keep in mind, though, that customers are traditionally only transactional in their thinking. The great CEO Henry Ford was totally against market research and his hilarious and important quotation on that subject is: "If I'd asked them what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."

Keeping communications open

Your brand can lose its luster unless you keep polishing it. Always have the pulse of your customer base. Confirm that they're satisfied, more than satisfied, actually. Make sure they're happy and make them feel special. Your brand is in their hands.

Chapter 6

The 10 Biggest Myths About Branding

In This Chapter

- * Brands need polishing on a regular basis
 - * Branding is more important than what you make or do
 - * Branding is a crucial part of your business
 - * Branding is not just about your point of difference
 - * Branding is not just marketing in disguise
 - * Branding is more important than ever
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This chapter debunks the 10 most dangerous myths about branding, lays out some eternal truths and explains what course businesses should take to become and stay leading brands.

Myth 1: “I Already Have a Great Brand, so I’m OK”

If you have a great brand, you are already ahead of 99% of other small businesses, but it’s a grave mistake to think your work is done.

Correct Rule: Brands are constant but changing

A brand needs consistent polishing to keep it shiny. People can be fickle and may well choose to try something new just because they feel like making a change. A new product can enter your marketplace or consumer needs might change with the times. Your brand has to keep up. If, like Apple, your brand is cool, you must keep doing new things that are cool. Apple does it by introducing new products and new generations of products with novel features.

A brand also needs to continue WOWing its customers. Your brand is dependent on what they say but it is your job to make sure they love it enough to keep talking about it. One big mistake or bad customer service policy can dull a brand.

Every brand must find a way to remain relevant and timely. You most often see these kinds of shifts in visual looks and brand mascots. Brands refine their logos every once in a while so as not to look dated. Betty Crocker has been updated many times. Ronald McDonald slimmed down when fast food came under attack for making people obese. The Michelin Man changes his look as tire technology evolves. The oldest brand on record is Aunt Jemima; she was made to look more dignified as attitudes towards African Americans improved.

Correct Action: Keep updating and polishing your brand

Keep your brand current, listen and react to your customers. Be vigilant about finding and fixing unWOWs. If you don't, your brand may tarnish.

Myth 2: I Already Know My Brand, I Don't Need to Boast About It

You may have a handle on what you think is important about your business but, if the rest of the world doesn't know about it, or disagrees with you, your business could be in real trouble. Telling the world about a great brand isn't boasting, it's a crucial part of your business. Boasting and branding are the exact opposites: boasting is talking about yourself whereas branding is others talking about you.

Correct Rule: Brands do not exist in businessmen's heads. They exist in the minds of consumers

If no one but you knows about your brand, no one will have reason to try your product or learn to love it. If people don't love your brand they won't sing its praises. If they don't sing its praises, you don't get pre-sold customers, extra credibility and social media mentions.

Plus, no matter what you believe about your brand, it is what *other people* think that counts. You may see your brand as wonderfully traditional while potential customers are turned off because they see your company as stodgy. You may believe your company gives great service, but it only takes a few customers who are dissatisfied to convince the world otherwise.

Correct Action: Broadcast and publicize your brand

Once you've developed your branding elements, get the word out everywhere. The goal is to be consistently attracting new people to your brand while keeping your happy customers excited and enthusiastic so they'll continue spreading the word. Use public

relations so it sounds like other people are telling the world about your wonderful brand and then follow up with reminder advertising.

Myth 3: A Great Product is More Important Than Branding

This is one myth that I wish was true. The quality of your product is important, but it is definitely not as important as your branding.

Correct rule: brand quality trumps product quality

Branding makes a me-too product special and gives consumers a reason to select it over a similar product. It even makes a poor quality product sell well. On the other hand, a great product won't sell without great branding. It can be the best product or service of its kind but, if people don't know about it or don't believe it's the best, it won't sell. Rice Krispies is just another breakfast cereal. People buy it because it goes "snap crackle and pop". Here's the funny thing – it doesn't snap, won't crackle and has never popped. But, because branding says that it snaps, crackles and pops, and since no other breakfast cereal does, it is a huge success.

Correct action: Increase your brand to increase your sales

The best product in the world won't sell if people don't know about your brand and why it's better. Make your brand stronger, get the word out more and increase your number of Brand Advocates. Use the web and social media to get people talking about your brand.

Myth 4: Branding is Only a Side Issue, not the Main Issue in a Company's Success

Most business owners don't know how crucial branding is to a company's success so, of course, they assume it is a side issue. Like marketing, branding takes second place to all the other aspects of running a business.

Correct Rule: Branding is only part of the engine, but it is the fuel that makes it run

A business is like a well-oiled machine in that it needs something to make it run. A machine can't run if it doesn't have fuel. A business stalls without sales, and branding is what gets you sales. Since sales are what make your business run, branding needs to be the most important part of the machine.

Correct Action: Ensure branding is a central piece of your marketing engine

First, bump marketing to the top of your to-do list. Then, put branding above it. Without a strong brand in place you don't have anything to market. The most important objective of marketing a business is to keep the brand shining. Make marketing a top priority and branding the top priority of marketing.

Myth 5: Branding is Less Important These Days Than Ever Before

This may be the biggest myth of all. The world revolves around branding more than ever.

Correct Rule: Branding has never been more important

Selling used to be the most important thing in business. People went into a store and salespeople sold them on one product over another. Today we have a buying culture. People learn about products on their own and often make the decision on which one to purchase before they ever enter a store. That is, if they enter the store at all. Customers are as, if not more likely, to buy online as they are to buy in person.

Correct Action: Have customers and prospects pre-sold

Branding gets you noticed when people are looking for information about products and services. The better your branding, the easier it will be for them to find out about you and the more likely they will be to like what they learn. Great branding also turns satisfied customers into Brand Advocates who will help sell your brand to others. Online Brand Advocates can be very powerful. They can influence a sale long before the prospective customer knows he's in the market for something.

Myth 6: Branding is Deceptive

Lots of things in life are deceptive but branding as a whole isn't one of them. How could it be? Branding is what they say, not what you say.

Correct Rule: Great branding is memorable and valuable

Branding cannot be deceptive, because it is what they say. Great branding is based on people's experiences with your brand. It can't be deceptive because it's true. Having a great brand makes you a leader and leaders drive their markets. Can you think of anything more valuable to your business?

Correct Action: Ensure your brand is consistent with your product

Make sure your message is true. Don't promise what your product can't deliver. Give your customers a great experience with your product or service. If something goes wrong, admit it and fix it so that you turn an unWOW into a WOW.

Myth 7: A Brand is the Same As A USP

Your selling proposition is a statement about what makes your product different. It is connected to your brand, but it is not your brand.

Correct Rule: A USP creates differentiation, branding creates memories

Your USP is a marketing message which is usually a straightforward explanation of why someone should pick your product over a competitor. Your brand is about more than just your product, it's about your customers' entire experience with your product and your company.

Apple products are revolutionary and do a lot of things that other products don't. That's at least part of what makes them different, which is a fine USP when an Apple product is first introduced. When copycat products hit the market, that USP might not be true anymore (at least until the next version of the Apple product), but the brand Apple will always be cool and customers will always have great memories about their experience with the brand.

Correct Action: Have both a great USP and a great brand

Your USP and your brand don't do the same thing. A great USP gives a rational reason for choosing your product and a great brand takes care of everything else.

Myth 8: Branding is Just A Subset of Marketing and Sales

Branding isn't a subset of anything; branding is branding. Everything about your business affects your brand, from the quality of your product (and packaging, if appropriate), to the way you treat your customers, the persona you project on social media, the readability of your product directions and the user-friendliness of your website.

Correct Rule: Branding, marketing and sales all have different functions

Branding is about creating an image, appearance and experience for your customers and prospective customers. Marketing involves all the activities you use to promote your brand to the universe, while Sales is a one-sided conversation in which you do all the talking.

A cute way of understanding this is:

- ✓ The purpose of the marketing department is to make the sales department obsolete
- ✓ The purpose of the branding department is to make the marketing department obsolete.

Correct Action: Add a Great Brand to your marketing and sales efforts

Working with an unbranded product puts marketing and sales at a disadvantage because it leaves them with half a story to tell. A great brand is bigger, stronger, more interesting and more exciting than just its product. A great brand helps sell itself and attracts Brand Advocates. In turn, Brand Advocates are super salespeople and marketers for a brand.

Myth 9: Branding is Silly

Some branding is silly, but that doesn't mean it's not great branding. Silly can humanize a product, make dull categories interesting and cut through the ever-worsening clutter of advertising, marketing and PR messages. The Jolly Green Giant is totally silly. The Michelin Man – an overweight man made of white tires (when tires are actually black) – is totally silly. “Snap Crackle and Pop” is completely silly since the product does not make that noise hence it has no meaning of any kind. A swoosh is completely silly. Indeed, practically every brand has a bit of silliness or light-heartedness to it. So what? No harm is done and the branded product outsells its competitors.

Correct Rule: Branding's silliness is sometimes what makes it memorable

People love silly when it's appropriate. They remember things that are silly and love to talk about them because silly things can make people laugh. Plus — and it's a big plus — silly things go viral on the Internet.

Correct Action: Make your brand memorable through whatever means is consistent with your firm's values

Silly isn't appropriate for every brand. It's best used to make mundane things interesting and to make boring experiences fun. Some brands use drama very effectively; others need to be seen as serious and professional.

Myth 10: Branding is Just for Products and Services

People definitely need to brand themselves as well. When you're unbranded you are the same as everyone else who does what you do. To paraphrase, a consultant is a consultant is a consultant.

Correct Rule: Every product, service and person needs a brand

Without branding, potential clients have no idea why they should choose to work with you. Being branded makes you a leader in your field, and tells people you are the best or at least special. Your brand also highlights the things that make you special, different, important and valuable.

Correct Action: Create your own glowing brand

Make yourself a leader. It doesn't matter how far you have to narrow your niche in order to do so. Being number one in something has a halo effect. People like to work with smart and nice people, so have a personality too.