

Set Your Company Apart

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Creating language, tone and image – marketing your company as different

I want to create an image that is unique to my company. How do I set a tone that will represent who we are and what language should I use to promote it? This question comes from a business owner who has been in business quite awhile, and who is now thinking through where to go next with the business. He recognizes that he needs to separate his company from everyone he competes with.

There are several things to consider when defining what our companies will look like, and how to make our companies stand out as unique and special. Today, we'll consider the following: creating an image, creating a slogan, effective use of words and vocabulary, effective use of pictures, in order to create the look and feel you want for your business. The name of the game is recognition, differentiation, and identification.

When creating an image, there are some standard, basic questions you must answer, for yourself, and for anyone you might hire to work with you.

- What makes your company or product unique?
- What do you have that other similar products / services don't?
- What do your customers value about your company

- What does the market at large want, that your company does / can provide

Do some research to find out what makes your company so special. You have to be able to identify and emphasize the difference between you and everyone else, otherwise, why would anyone bother to seek you out over your competition. Also, think about whether you're giving your clients what they can afford, or what they want, what they need or what they hope to have.

Now its time for you to create a slogan, something that will stick in your potential customer's memory. Here are some suggestions for ways to become memorable. Use 2 verbs, instead of one – it gives any slogan more punch and energy. Use “feel good” words, add “ing”, and use the present tense. Try this: “When you're thinking about _____ (something your product or service does or represents), get moving with _____ (name your product or service).” “Feeling your best is easy when you're using _____ (your service).

Be sure to fit your language to the tone you want to create – whether casual or formal, business like or familiar, trendy or stylish. Use adjectives to appeal to needs. Think about whether you want to convey safety, affiliation, adventure or comfort.

Here are four different ways of appealing to the same idea:: “Wish you were richer?” is different from, “Big rewards for small risks, learn how the big boys do it”, which is also different from, “Searching for your financial peak?”, which in turn is different from, “Starting today, join successful men and women, building wealth for the next generation”. Think about the connotation of the words you use, and search for words with the best feeling for what you want to convey.

Don't be afraid or disturb to jog your audience in order to get their attention – being predictable is often less effective than putting together something that doesn't fit. A disconnect can cause the reader to pay attention, in order to figure out what's going on – as long as they can “get it” in 10 seconds or less. If the reader has to struggle to grasp what's going on, they'll likely miss your message. Do something that interrupts a typical pattern, then make it easy for the reader to connect up with the essence of what you have to say.

Be sure to use pictures to get your message across. In trying to grab a potential customer, the right picture can be worth more than a thousand words. The wrong picture can destroy everything. Know what will grab your target audience. Appeal to their senses. Show them how they would feel if they used your

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product or service. Create an atmosphere of, “must have”, or “can’t do without”. And in case you were wondering, yes, sex sells – almost anything, if you’re willing to go that route. So do safety and acceptance.

Go for recognition, by marrying images and words of your product or service, with things that will jog your prospect’s memory. Remind your target customer of what they want, and how they’ll feel when they get it.

Make sure the images, words and tone you select are unlike anything used by your competitors. The worst thing in the world is to spend time effort and money on a brochure, advertisement, or proposal, only to have a prospect completely confuse your company with another. Use unique colors. Be sure the visuals set your company apart. Make it hard for your competitor to copy you.

Finally, give your target audience a message – in words and pictures – that sticks because they identify with it. It is who they are. It is what they are all about. They don’t have to stretch very far, to seem themselves in the picture you paint. Remember, any promotion you do is about your target audience, not about you. Unless you are a member of your target audience, it doesn’t matter if you “identify”; it only matters if your target does. Keep your ego out of the discussions about what

goes into your message. Put yourself squarely in your customer’s shoes, clothes, heart, and brain, when you’re deciding what to say, how to say it, and what your message should look and feel like.

Looking for a good book? Here are three you should try. *Ogilvy on Advertising*, a classic by David Ogilvy; *Bang, Getting Your Message Heard in a Noisy World*, by Linda Kaplan Thaler, and *Purple Cow, Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable*, by Seth Godin.

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