

Look Big, Sell Big

There's no question that small businesses have distinct advantages, such as agility and innovation, in today's marketplace. So, you may ask, why not take advantage of your small stature when branding your company? Why not look small?

Here's why: the comfort factor. To successfully brand your business, you should project an image of strength and stability—traits often associated with big companies. Customers need to trust that you can and will deliver on your promises. They have to feel comfortable with you. You can tell customers you stand behind your products and services, but if your marketing materials scream “amateur” or “mom and pop,” forget about it.

It's not about looking conservative; it's about looking professional. After all, big companies don't fall into a one-size-fits-all mold. There's plenty of room for creativity. Consider Apple Computer vs. Microsoft. While their branding couldn't be more different, both project big-company professionalism.

Fortunately, looking like a big company isn't rocket science. The cardinal rule to looking big is to coordinate your promotional materials—from your business cards to your website and everything in between. If your marketing materials don't match, potential customers may believe they're looking at different companies. Here are four easy ways to tie your marketing materials together:

1 Create a clean and uncomplicated logo. Consider the logos of Fortune 500 companies like Nike, Sprint and Target. These huge companies didn't pick clean, simple logos by accident. They chose them because they fit the key requirements of solid logo design: They're easy to remember, they can be resized without losing detail, and they work in one color (for instance, when used in faxes). They're unique and meaningful as well, proving you don't need complex artwork and intricate details to leave an impression.

A good logo is essential because it'll appear on—and should match—all of your marketing materials. From a graphics perspective, your logo is your brand foundation. Build it wisely.

2 Make one color yours. Choose a color—preferably one from your logo—and use it throughout your marketing materials. Again, look at the big guys: Target focuses on red; Sprint uses yellow. Notice that each has chosen one color, not two or three.

Color plays a huge role in memory recall. As much as possible, your color should set you apart, work with your industry and image, and relate to your brand promise. Most important, the color you choose should appear as the predominant color on every promotional piece you develop.

3 Work with only one or two fonts. Again, your goal is to get customers to remember you and associate your materials with your brand attributes. Fonts, like colors and graphics, project different images. For example, if you want to appear conservative, I would recommend Helvetica.

4 Stay the course. At some point, you may get sick of your brand standards. Unfortunately, this usually occurs at the same time your brand starts resonating with your customers. Or you may want fresh material for a trade show or customer meeting and may be tempted to introduce an exciting new color or unusual font selection. Remind yourself that while consistency isn't always fun, it's the proven path to branding success.

Nowadays, your company's actual size may not matter, but its perceived size does. And looking big will pay off big-time.

By John Williams February 13, 2007



Use these
branding
tactics to give
your small
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a big,
professional
image.

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