

## Imprinting Your Brand On Your Customers' Mind

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**Warning:** when you're developing marketing, sales, and communications materials, watch out for these questions:

- Can we change the logo's look to stand out more on that light background?
- Can we abbreviate our company name since space is tight?
- Can we put the logo in different places on print ads and Web pages each time we create new ones?
- And the advertising industry's favorite: Can we make the logo bigger?

The truth is, we probably can do all these things, but following these suggestions won't improve your brand awareness. In fact, doing them could make it worse. The real solution is maintaining brand continuity and consistency in your materials.

Your brand is the personal, emotional tie between you and your customer. Your brand is more than just a logo, it's the sum of your advertising, customer service, product development, and every other aspect of your business that touches the customer.

Why is brand design consistency across all materials so important? Because your logo is your company's face to the marketplace, it provides the visual foundation strategy from which materials should be designed. When you constantly change your brand to make it match certain environments, you weaken your logo's familiarity among customers. You also end up breaking the visual relationship already created with those customers. You're forcing customers to be re-introduced to your company each time.

Making even simple changes to your logo design not only confuses your customers; it can also jeopardize your brand's value and long-term equity. All marketing and communication materials need to have synergy with one another to ensure that your message stands out and is noticed. Through consistency strategies, brands like AOL and GE have become household names and they've created brand loyalty and measurable equity.

Think of all the advertising clutter out there. People are bombarded with visual, textual, and auditory messages hundreds of times a day. To break through, you have to build a synergistic theme throughout all of your marketing and sales materials as well as communication channels. This is critical: it will ensure that your audience knows who you are, what you offer, and the value you bring to your customers time and time again. This builds brand awareness, recognition, and, ultimately, long-term loyalty and brand preference.

Brand continuity has its benefits. New programs and materials can be created more quickly and easily, resulting in higher return on investment. Do you have a brand continuity strategy for your marketing efforts? Consider these questions:

1. Are your logo's color, size, and font style consistent throughout all company materials? Do you have a brand-standards guide so everyone knows the dos and don'ts for using the logo offline (print) and online (Web)?
2. If your logo needs to be manipulated to fit into a specific design, is it clear how the logo can be changed? Does the designer make changes based only on the project's needs or for the good of your brand?
3. In your print advertising campaign, do you have a consistent design template with the logo and general contact information in the same location?
4. Do you have a consistent call-to-action throughout your marketing materials? If so, what is it, and is it stated in the same way throughout all materials?

5. If you put all corporate marketing and sales materials out on your desk do they all look similar and like they're from the same company? Or do they look as if several companies were sending them?

6. What ties all of your materials together: font style, colors, layout, headline, logo placement and structure, etc.? What main common threads tie them together? Is that thread strong enough to support brand continuity?

7. Is your logo on all corporate materials that are used internally and externally? Showcasing your logo to your internal audience as well as your external one is key to maintaining and strengthening the brand pride from the inside out.

Another mistake that many companies make is "mini-branding" or "sub-branding." This is where they create new logos and looks for each product they make. It's in your best interest to keep your branding consistent across products; don't create "dueling logos" in your materials. And unless you have an unlimited marketing budget that allows you to promote each sub-brand, you're going to be further ahead financially if you do straightforward advertising that strengthens your existing brand. Your entire company is your brand, not just a product or specific service. As Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

To learn more about brand continuity and how to use it successfully in your marketing and communication practices, contact Karin K. Schaff Glazier at Pinpoint Positioning by calling 585.787.3164 or by emailing [karin@pinptpositioning.com](mailto:karin@pinptpositioning.com). She is also available for speaking engagements and company workshops.

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