

## **Branding – is it really important?**

Try standing in front of a group of people and introducing yourself using someone else's name. Does it feel uncomfortable? Do you feel "out of touch" with yourself? Are you afraid that you have confused your listeners – perhaps they will be unsure as to who you really are?

What you have just done is to tinker with an important element of "your" brand. Certainly, it is not the only element, and "what is in a name" - surely I am more than that? Yes, you are, but you have spent many years weaving the picture of who you are, and this mosaic has become clearly defined at a very emotional level within you. And your name is your principal moniker, so when it is messed with, a lot of "other" stuff feels messed with as well.

Congratulations – those emotions reflect you did a great job of branding yourself. And for all the reasons that you invested a lifetime of energy in "your brand" you need to consider doing the same for your company.

Branding your firm is a crucial part of your overall marketing strategy. Establishing a brand involves defining your company, knowing exactly what niche you serve in your industry and convincing your potential customers your product or service is the best solution to their problem.

The smaller the enterprise, the more important branding is because small firms have fewer resources for marketing and sales, therefore, placing your company in a position to leverage those resources is crucial to growth and financial success. If you have established a strong brand you will not have to work as hard to attract potential customers. This means, to have the greatest impact branding needs to be done before you consider other marketing or sales activity. It also necessitates that you define your market segment clearly, and with a strong bias toward focused communities of interest that you can reach efficiently.

When branding is successful it makes the telling of your story easier, allows you to separate yourself from the crowd, draws the customer into your sphere of influence, and builds their confidence in your company as 'the right solution'. In a very critical way it convinces the customer both emotionally and intellectually that they do not have to look any further. Once you have captured their attention in this way a competitor will have a difficult time changing their mind.

Not only does it increase your potential for doing business with a customer, but research shows the clearer your brand message is the more likely the potential customer will tell others about you, including why they think you're the right solution to buy. Once this "messaging" process begins it increases the leveraging of your resources even further.

By the way, my name is Albert Pines, and I would like to keep it that way – thank you.

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