



# BRAND RANCH

## BRAND & MARKETING CONSULTANCY

BRAND DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER

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Dear Readers:

In many aspects, 2007 was a difficult and turbulent period. Every day seemed to bring more bad news: insurgent violence in Iraq, home foreclosures due to the subprime interest collapse, climate change, soaring oil prices, and political unrest across the globe.

And who knows what 2008 will bring? As a business owner or CEO, you would be well advised to consider potential scenarios that might affect your organization, and develop contingency plans in the event '08 brings the economic swings some have predicted. In "scenario planning," you identify the issues or situations that could severely affect your business, suppliers, or consumers, and develop strategies to avoid, forestall, or mitigate the possible consequences. A few of the possibilities warranting thought include:

- National recession
- Tighter loan availability
- Rising oil prices, up to and over \$100/barrel
- Continuing housing slump
- Catastrophic wildfires
- Bankruptcy of a key supplier

These are just a few of the many issues that smart business executives are following and tracking. Planning ahead for potential problems allows you to meet challenges head-on should they arise, soundly prepared with a well-considered strategy, rather than merely reacting under duress. It is always better to plan rather than react—crisis management is critical for any business in today's world. The Tylenol case is a great example of a company that had a crisis management plan in place before the scare and recall, executed the plan meticulously and today remains the category leader.

Our previous newsletter, which focused on packaging, generated a lot of questions and feedback. If your package design, brand identity style, and execution don't leverage your brand position or create impact at the point of sale, you might want to think long and hard about a change that will bring innovation to your category or brand.

Enjoy this issue. We continue to look for your comments and ideas for upcoming issues.

Happy New Year, and best wishes for a prosperous 2008.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael". The script is fluid and cursive, with a prominent 'M' and a trailing flourish.

Michael Blanck  
President





# TEN TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR BRAND IN 2008

*As we face a new year, which may very well hold major negative economic implications, remember that the businesses that survive and succeed are those that pay close attention to their branding. In previous issues we have covered the importance of collecting and tracking metrics (information) that allow you to make sound strategic business decisions. This is critical, but building your brand with sound principles is just as important.*

## HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE KEYS TO BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL BRAND:

### 1. The smaller you are, the more important branding becomes.

Small businesses must use their limited resources where they will have the biggest payoff—in distinguishing their brand as offering something distinct (different/relevant) from all others in the sector.

All businesses and brands must understand what their strategy is and how they will make money. This starts with a well-written vision and mission statement. How are you going to market? What does your brand stand for and what is the identity? You must clearly understand what problems you are trying to solve for your customers (who are you targeting) and then communicate the specific features/benefits that will make life better, more pleasant, or easier for them.

When you are a small business, you don't have the added flexibility or capital to waste money by not having all your business elements working in the same direction to maximize your return on investment. You must have all your business strategies and marketing communications plans working to build brand differentiation, relevance, and knowledge.

### 2. It's not (all) about the money.

“Guerrilla marketing” and grassroots efforts can be incredibly effective. And don't forget about public relations as another cost-effective tool.

National brands can afford to spend and invest tons of money, but smaller, local businesses must focus their energy on innovative marketing opportunities that can help build a brand without breaking the budget. You should spend at least 10 to 15 percent of your time thinking about how to deliver your message in a low cost but effective manner. Think outside the box, and look around you for resources, tools, or alliances that can help you get your message out to prospective customers.

### 3. Develop and market a web site.

Design your web site with your customers preferences in mind, not your own.

In today's techno-society you must have a web site that allows customers to learn more about your company, business products, and brand. The misconception is that, if you build it they will come. The truth is, you must actively market your web site in order to build awareness and make it more searchable on demand (SEO). Include your web address in every communication you send out to the marketplace. One method of making your site rank higher in searches is to link your site to other relevant sites, like the chamber of commerce, trade journals, business associates, and so on. It would also be wise to learn all you can about (SEO) search engine optimization.

### 4. Sell yourself, not your vendors.

#### *Separate yourself from the pack.*

Implement a branding strategy that sets your company apart and highlights the special product or service that you offer. Do not use your supplier's or vendor's name, or ads that only sell their products and only allow you to simply add your logo. Create your own platform and use it consistently in all your mediums. The more you build your individual brand identity, the more impact your marketing dollars will have, and the greater your returns will be.

### 5. Harvest feedback from your clients—directly.

Business experts say it's about 8 to 10 times more expensive to gain a new customer than it is to retain them. Loyalty is enormously profitable.

Business owners should never lose touch with their customers. It's vitally important to know exactly how they feel about your products, business policies, and brand. It's impossible to overestimate the value of taking 5 to 10 minutes just to have a conversation. You can conduct one-on-one interviews in person, over the phone, and through customer satisfaction web site and mail-in surveys. Your customers will tell you how they feel—as long as you ask them.



## TEN TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR BRAND IN 2008

### 6. Brand to lead.

A consistent brand is a strong brand and it takes time to build.

The ability to project confidence and professionalism is the key in building a leading brand. The less money you budget toward brand-building initiatives, the more you need to consider how your brand can help position your business in the minds of consumers as a market leader. Having a consistent, well-designed, professional brand is critical if you want to play with the market leaders. In most categories today, the top three or four brands are the only ones truly making money. The rest are fighting for survival.

### 7. Live your brand.

#### *It all matters.*

Remember that over the course of a business day, every encounter or decision can help you build (or not) your brand. Every sales call, every support call, every greeting to every customer who walks into your store affects how your company is perceived. This means that every employee, from the CEO down to the interns, should understand and buy-in to your mission. Any wrong or inconsistent message or action that does not support your brand strategy or mission will cause confusion in the mind of your customers. This will result in lost sales and loyalty.

### 8. Bring it all back home.

#### *Every touch point should echo the brand strategy and core message.*

From the name of the company and its products, to the logo, to the greeting on the phone system—every element of marketing and promotion must tie directly into your core branding and business strategy. Great brands reinforce the core message in everything they do, say, and deliver.

### 9. Prove you're the only real solution.

It's not about being the cheapest or even the best, but about the sense that what you offer is exactly what the consumer wants and needs. It's all about differentiation and relevance to the user.

Stop chasing sales and start building demand for your brand. Create the perception that your brand is the only real solution by citing specific features and benefits. Don't merely present your product—control the exchange, by managing the brand information and message in a way that will solidify your brand in the consumer's mind and heart.

Many companies selling both direct (one step) or through retailers (two step) think their job is done once the product/brand is on the shelf. In truth, this is just the beginning of an important relationship. You must do what you can to make sure the product sells through the retailer's location, so there will be reorders and you will maintain your shelf presence and retailer's preference. You must also make sure the end consumer is delighted with the product and their total experience.

### 10. Be bold and prosper.

#### *Bolder is better, if you can back it up.*

With consumers being bombarded by over 5,000 messages a day, the bolder messages are the ones that stand out. Cut through the clutter, with messages that go beyond the obvious and catch the eyes, ears, and imagination of the customer.

Bold claims, backed up, are an excellent marketing strategy—if you can deliver. It absolutely comes down to the proof and the delivery. A bold message you're not equipped to back up will kill your business.

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# THE AGING WEST

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**ONE OF THE GREATEST TRENDS AFFECTING THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION IS THE MIGRATION OF RETIRING BABY BOOMERS.**

Factors drawing retirees to Montana and Wyoming, as opposed to Florida and Arizona, include low crime, fresh air, negotiable traffic, and abundant outdoor activities. Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks are working like magnets to draw boomers into our region.

**THE NUMBERS ARE QUITE DRAMATIC.**

In 2000, Montana ranked 18th and Wyoming 43rd for the relative size of their 65-years-and-over populations. But by 2030, the Census Bureau predicts that Montana will rank 5th (a 13-position jump) and Wyoming 3rd (a 40-position jump) in the nation for their over-65 populations.

**AS A MARKETER AND BUSINESS OWNER OR CEO, THESE NUMBERS COULD OFFER TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY.**

Rather than slug it out in a stagnant area of your category, think about your potentials for target marketing, new product/service development, and innovation. Think of what you might do to position your brand to take advantage of this growing, relatively affluent segment. Smart businesses study trends and take advantage of their growing opportunities. That would be you, right?