

BRANDING 101



Is your company trustworthy and reliable? Hip and edgy? Experienced? Forward-thinking? Your brand is what conveys these ideas to customers. It makes promises that your business backs up every single day; your brand is your reputation.

Where this can go wrong with branding is when your brand conveys negative ideas that you probably don't want associated with your business. Maybe bad reviews paint a picture of your company as uncaring or unreliable. Perhaps sloppy copy, ignored social media accounts or a bug-ridden website leaves the impression that you don't pay close attention to detail.

What you say about yourself is only part of branding. In today's interconnected, always-on world, it's impossible to fake a positive brand. Why? Because your brand isn't what you say about yourself, it's what you do and it's what others say about you. And in the business world, what you do and what others say about your company is who you are.

Your brand is your contract with your customers. What will you deliver, and how? When customers see your logo, peruse your website or chat with you in person, they are forming impressions that govern how they interact with you and what they expect from you.

The tricky thing about brands is that they're maintained over the long haul. A reputation as a company with great customer service is built slowly through daily positive interactions with your audiences.

Online brand management can be critical when it comes to brand positioning. Partnering with a local public relations firm, a team who's adept at spotting opportunities to help put your best foot forward, can make a big difference. They can help shine a light on positives, and minimize any negatives that pop up.

There's no "fix it fast" path to small business branding. You can't ignore corporate branding, wait for something to go wrong and then try to fix it fast. That just doesn't work, because you'll have no authority or brand equity on which you can rely.

Think of it like this: If your products are generally highly regarded, one faulty product will likely be seen as an outlier. You can appeal to your stellar reputation to let customers know that it was a one-time error. But if you don't have a good reputation to point to, customers will see a faulty product as a sign of your poor overall quality and quickly dismiss you. And that's a position from which it's very hard to recover.

Creating meaningful content and sharing it online is one solid way to position a brand. When you provide your customers with relevant information that makes a positive difference to them, you're establishing yourself as a trustworthy and useful authority.

Another great way to build a brand over time is through interactions with customers. Positive, friendly, helpful interactions show customers there are real people involved with the business who care. Obviously, this covers your in-person interactions, but it also applies online. Two-thirds of online customers turn to social media for customer service, after all.

Again, the key to building a great brand is regular, consistent, amazing work and positioning your company as a trusted and respected authority in your industry. If you'd like any help with that, please give our Whatcom County public relations and marketing firm a call! We can help. 360-305-3720 | pattirowilson.com

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