

▶ Expand Your Brand

5 Tips for Solid Brand Growth

BY KIM LONGETEIG, FRBMA

at the beginning of every New Year, many people make a resolution to right some wrong in their life. Maybe it's to exercise more or drink less. Regardless of the focus, a resolution represents a commitment to effect change in some aspect of one's life when something is amiss. Your brand is no different and should be given a regular "once over" to determine if changes need to be made. Is your brand in a funk or feeling a bit flat? Is there more than one version or different color variations of your logo being used in your marketing materials or plugging up your files? Are there materials from a prior branding effort floating around your facility? If you answered yes to any of these questions, it may be time to resolve to set a path for solid brand growth.

#1 Evaluate Your Brand

Your brand isn't just your logo, but your logo is a major component of your brand. Take a good, hard look at the imagery of your brand and, if it's outdated or conveys the wrong message, consider updating it. Rebranding doesn't have to be an extensive, costly process. It may be possible to refresh your brand to breathe new life into it. Next, think about the experience your customers have with your brand. Do they know what values your brand represents? Would they refer your brand to their friends? If not, it's time to rethink your communication strategy. Finally, if you have old materials hanging around, throw them away. There aren't many better ways to create brand confusion than to try and make use of old materials.

#2 Be Consistent

When you have a strong brand but fail to adhere to strict style guidelines, your brand becomes diluted. Too many times I have seen logos stretched, squished, and modified either in color or style by too many people with good intentions until the brand's best qualities are diminished. Implement a style guide for your entire organization that shows how and where the brand will be used. This guide will detail size, style, color, and any additional messaging or tag line that accompanies the logo. Your target audience should be consistently exposed to your brand in a way that they can relate to and recognize what your brand offers without question.

#3 Increase Your Reach

In order to create an association between your brand and your target audience, you need to put your brand in more places to create exposure. With the advent of social media, we have new opportunities to share our brand in addition to the traditional marketing mix. Remember that every action within your organization equates to your brand's "voice," and the story your brand tells has the ability to inspire and deter brand loyalty. If you want to


create stickiness with your brand, the best way to do that is to repeatedly expose your target audience to your brand and your brand's message across multiple mediums.

#4 Achieve Separation

If you stripped off the branding of your marketing materials, and those of the businesses near or like yours, would your customers be able to tell who is who? Or are you caught in a "me too" environment where everyone is selling the same services and using similar messaging? An up-to-date brand strategy will help you identify what the core differentiators are of your brand. Think about a good experience you've had with a brand. Now, think about a less-favorable experience. I can think of a few. Ask yourself, if your loyalty were tested, would you come back to that brand? Regardless of your answer, this thought process may help you think about your own brand's strengths and weaknesses and help you to better communicate what makes your brand unique in a sea of sameness.

#5 Your Brand Promise

A brand is not pushy. Rather, it pulls your customer to it through a promise delivered. That delivery is a positive experience through shared values, quality results, knowledgeable staff—essentially every action, policy, advertisement, and marketing effort creates the promise of your brand. You must live up to it and deliver consistently. Success or failure in living up to your brand promise creates brand perceptions, and perceptions are very powerful. They can create an unwavering brand loyalty that brings repeat customers. Keep in mind if brand perceptions are negative, they can live on in the minds of your target audience for years to come and can be very difficult, but not impossible, to change.

Whether you're reading this on the treadmill or kicking back on the sofa, there's no time like the present to create a brand resolution and commit to changes that will drive increased brand loyalty. 



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founded Ali'i Marketing & Design in 2006. She has worked, collectively, in marketing, advertising, graphic design, and social media for over 18 years. Kim is an active member of the RBMA and currently serves on the RBMA Board of Directors as secretary. She is chairperson of the communications committee and previously headed both the Educational Materials and Products Committee and the Marketing Subcommittee. Several pieces of her design work have earned RBMA Quest Awards, and she was the recipient of the RBMA Global Achievement award in 2011. Kim can be reached at 808.769.4351 or kim@alidesign.com.