



ONLINE BRANDING
GUIDEBOOK

Create Internet Brand
Recognition!

brand

STEP BY STEP!

Guidebook
for the Novice Brand Manager in
the Behavioral Health Industry
www.LocateTreatment.com



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STRATEGIZING.

The Online Whirlwind

Few things change more rapidly than the online world, and branding strategies need to be tailored effectively in order to keep pace in such a volatile environment. Keeping up requires constant vigilance to keep track of the changes in the online environment, and quick adaptations are crucial to staying on top of your branding as the online landscape in which your brand exists changes with rapidity. With the advent of social media and real-time updates on various platforms, news travels faster than ever and your brand will need continued maintenance to stay current and relevant. Develop a sound strategy and stick to it or your brand may be dismissed, forgotten about, and left behind.



Mind the Customer



Before you even begin developing and launching a brand strategy, the customer should always be kept in mind from the very beginning. Your brand strategy begins before your eventual customers end up buying your products and services, and you need to consider this from the outset. It is your customers that will eventually allow your business goals to come to fruition, so design your brand strategy around these customers before you even begin selling to ensure that your efforts are tailored properly to your specific audience.

If you already have an existing company and you are just looking to build your brand then it's really about raising awareness and getting the word out about your brand. Anything you can do to gain followers, attract visitors to your site, and remain relevant will help your brand gain prominence and respect.

First and foremost, you need to develop a comprehensive branding and online marketing strategy that is aimed at your audience of interest. No person, group, or company can please everyone, and it is therefore a waste of time, effort, and other resources trying to do so. You need to hone in on the people that matter and seek to ensure that your branding efforts address these people. Only relevant stakeholders that matter to your business are important, so you need to do everything you can to reach this people on as deep a level as possible. Quality wins out over quantity in the vast majority of cases, so trying to appeal to many people on a surface level may not be as effective as reaching fewer core customers on a deep and genuine level. Your customers are the foundation on which your business ultimately thrives, so focus on them with intensity and precision in order



to yield the greatest return on investment from all of your online branding efforts. There will of course always be some degree of variability amongst your customer base, but you should be able to find certain commonalities and core principles that relate to your customers, and you need to appeal to these in order to reach these customers in an impactful way. What sets your company's values and ideals apart from that of your competitor's that is meaningful to any potential customers? Determine what makes your business different from or better than the other options these potential customers have, and mold your branding around what sets you apart. These differences should be more significant than superficial nuances, but your online branding should be designed to highlight the positive attributes of whatever it is that you have to offer.



Always remember to keep your customers in mind when you're branding online and appeal to their common interests with a focus on why your business is a better choice than any other available options. Importantly, this customer-focused approach should carry through to your marketing campaigns, each of which should fit cohesively together into your overall marketing framework. By considering things comprehensively, you will be able to develop a branding strategy of unison and fluidity rather than one that consists merely of disjointed campaigns that lack an overall connection to the core principles of your brand.

Tell Your Story

Everyone likes a good story, and your brand fits into this narrative as well. By composing (and then actually using) a strong story, your brand can reap the benefits of appealing to the masses. With the simple act of storytelling you can make your brand relatable to prospective customers. People will feel more connected to your business and its brand if they have an understanding of where that brand came from and where it's going. You can help them understand this by developing a story and using it to promote your brand. Tell people what you're about and why—they want to know. That simple story can lead to new customers, as well as encourage previous customers to keep coming back for more business, simply because they feel connected to the story your brand tells. This technique is simple but effective, and neglecting to employ it will do your branding more harm than good.



Traffic Wanted

While it's great to have a strong story that your customers can get behind and support, the story only does your business any good if people are actually listening. For this to happen, you need website traffic. You need lots of website traffic. This can be tough at first but the process generally ends up being somewhat of a self-perpetuating one which builds on itself once it gets going as long as you ensure it keeps moving in the right direction. If you aren't able to get a ton of traffic on your own then you can always try out some of the paid traffic acquisition frameworks that exist, as long as you're getting the return on investment that you're seeking. Paying for website visitors that then pay you for the products and/or services you offer will usually work out in your favour, but you just need to ensure that your brand is getting a cost-effective boost from any efforts you make to acquire website traffic.

CONVERSION.

Once you have the traffic, it's important to convert as many of these visitors as possible into buyers. If many people are visiting your site but no one is buying anything you have to offer, then your sales are suffering due to poor conversion optimization. You want to be able to convert curious website visitors into people willing to spend money on whatever it is you offer. The first step here is to encourage initial visitors of your site to make purchases from you, bolstering your brand with every dollar they spend. Then, once you've converted visitors into buyers for the first time, you want to entice as many of these first-time buyers as possible into becoming second and third-time buyers. Repeat business drives sales and builds your brand to unprecedented heights, so try to get people coming back for more again and again to see your brand benefit immensely. When you convert a visitor into a customer you've done something good for your brand; when you convert a customer into a repeat customer, you've done something great.



Connectivity

Going back again to your customers, you should always be trying to build connections with your audience through content marketing. This can help you turn members of your audience who aren't already customers into first-time customers, and it can also encourage those who have purchased from you in the past to continue to do so. Blogs with articles and guides, as well as things like videos and webinars can all generate interest and appeal to your audience, as long as quality is never compromised. Take the time to seek out and create the best possible content because this is what will keep you connected to your audience. More importantly, it connects your audience to you and helps inform and incentivize potential customers. By motivating members of your audience to buy from you initially and then continue buying from you once they have first done so, you are helping to feed your brand and encourage

growth for your business. Your goal should be to build trust and rapport with your audience while always keeping ROI in mind and ensuring that you're getting the greatest possible benefit from the least possible investment on your part. It keeps coming back to quality here because flooding your audience with excessive content that lacks quality will hurt your brand instead of help it. While it is essential that you produce a steady stream of content to retain that audience connection, it is even more vital that the content you do deliver is so superb that it makes people want to come back for more again and again. By maintaining strong audience connections, you are facilitating the potential for customers to keep purchasing your goods and/or services, and that is ultimately how your branding allows your business to survive.

SPENDING WITH WISDOM.

Sometimes to find customers with whom to connect, you have to do more than just provide quality content and you have to actually spend money. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but again, the ROI that you receive has to make your efforts worth it from a financial perspective. It may be referred to as paid channel marketing or advertising, directory listings, search engine marketing, e-blast advertising, or pay-per-click marketing, but the general concept is that traffic is purchased through online advertising. The old adage about spending money to make money doesn't apply in every situation, but it is somewhat fitting here. By spending money through purchasing online advertising, the aim is to get that investment back, and then some, through the associated traffic that is generated. This strategy is often considered risky or inefficient but it can actually produce extraordinary results by generating ample traffic to which your business otherwise would not have had access. Once again, ROI is vitally important, as you need your investment to pay off through traffic to be worth it. This is linked to conversion optimization because you need to actually produce customers from the traffic generated by this approach, and then hopefully turn those initial customers into repeat customers to generate the sales on which your business depends.



Email Image

In addition to paid channel advertising, customers can be reached through email marketing. This technique is better used as a tool to maintain connections with existing customers and encourage repeat business than acquiring traffic and new customers, but it is a very valuable tool in its own right. By reaching out to your customers through sending them emails periodically, you can maintain that connection on your own terms. Since emails such as these have the infamous reputation of being notoriously spammy, caution needs to be exercised in this area. As always, focus on quality over quantity and provide your customers with high value in each email. Whenever possible, send out personalized and personable emails instead of automated ones which often end up being deleted before they are even read. If your customers are receiving, opening, and reading the emails you send them then that's half the battle.

You also want to ensure they are reading things in these emails that make them want to keep coming back for more. Design your emails to get your customers back to your website where they can find and purchase the products or services you have to offer. Email marketing can be a great way of cost-effectively generating ROI from your online branding efforts, just make sure you're attracting customers rather than scaring them off.

Affiliation

Another way to help make marginal improvements in your sales as part of your online branding strategy is through affiliate marketing. By using this technique, commissions can be earned through promotion of other



people, companies, products, or services. When sales are made by one party, the other party that did the promoting gets a commission as compensation for its promotional efforts. These arrangements can also serve to improve networking and overall web presence simply from getting into contact with a greater number of people and businesses. Overall, affiliate marketing can be quite effective when employed properly, but it is not necessarily a vital component of the online branding program of many companies.



THE GET AND BUILD.



A central component of getting traffic, acquiring customers, driving sales, and building your brand involves simply getting found online. If people can't find you, they can't get on your website, get behind the story of your brand, and support your business by making purchases from you. They need to find you first before they can provide any benefit to your brand, and many prospective customers will use search engines such as Google and Bing as a launching point when browsing the web for anything and everything. If you want these search engines to bring up your company and website in their search results, all you need is a little strategy. Search engine

optimization, commonly known simply by its acronym, SEO, allows search engines to hone in on the results that are most relevant to its users by focusing on keywords and crucial aspects that allow certain sites to rank higher than others. With clever use of SEO, companies can employ keywords strategically to rank high in search results on search engines like Bing and Google. This leads to higher click rates, more traffic, and most importantly, more customers buying more of what you have to offer. Once customers find your site initially, you can rely on some of the other strategies and techniques discussed here to retain those customers and build your brand organically, but SEO is a great way to get those customers to your site in the first place, when they may have otherwise never even knew you existed.

Relations with the Public

Online branding involves publicity, raising awareness, and getting found. It all sort of comes together into the overall goal of attaining and retaining relevance and prominence in the online world. Public relations fits into the whole picture by influencing the perception of your brand in the eyes of your competitors and more importantly, your customers. In the business of internet branding, perception is just about as important as reality, and your PR efforts can make a big difference in influencing that perception. If you're viewed in a good light by your customers, they will be more willing to listen to that story of your brand, and they will be more receptive to your efforts to attract them to buy. Poor perception in the public eye will lead to the opposite effect, and you may have difficulty selling even the best goods and services at the most competitive prices. By focusing on maintaining good relationships with all of your business' relevant stakeholders, you'll be more likely to generate the good press that will further increase your positive PR and improve your overall perception. Everything good or bad about your brand impacts that ongoing perception, and you need to actively take steps to nourish your perception in the eyes of others and keep your brand in a favourable position.



SOCIALLY SPEAKING

Another aspect that ties into your overall branding framework is your social media strategy. Making use of Facebook, Twitter, and other such options is important, but quality once again reigns supreme here. Rather than blindly setting up profiles and accounts on every social media platform imaginable, it's best to focus on ensuring that you are making effective use of the ones that you do use. Which ones should you use? The very same ones that are being used by your audience. You want your customers and prospects to find you on social media, so use the platforms they use and make sure you are going to stand out to them. Once they find you here they should be drawn in by something about your page or profile that eventually leads them back to your website where they can make purchases, have positive experiences with you, and go back to social media to tell the world of these positive experiences. This will lead to more people finding you on social media, making purchases on your website, and having more positive experiences which they then share via social media. The social media machine can be very perpetual in this regard, so hop on board right away and ride the social media train as far as it will take you.



MAKE A PLAN, DEVELOP A SCHEDULE, COMMIT! GET IT DONE.

This guide has highlighted tips and techniques to incorporate into your overall online branding strategy, but it has not yet touched on keeping up with the technological trends that impact how your customers will be finding you on the web and accessing your sites. Desktops and laptops are being increasingly swapped out for smartphones and tablets, so website optimization for mobile use will only become more important. If potential customers are trying to access and navigate your website on their smartphones but are unable to do so because your site isn't properly optimized for mobile use, they are just going to go elsewhere (likely to one of your competitors) and you could end up losing business. Take the time to embrace the modern cross-platform world and exercise the attention to detail necessary to make the online experience as user-friendly and intuitive as possible for your visitors on various devices and this will carry through to your bottom line. Once you're optimized for the mobile web you'll be ready and able to attract and secure customers using any number of different devices, and your brand will become more relevant and prominent.



When making use of all of the suggestions in this guide, keep in mind that certain things may work for some businesses but not for others. These are simply guidelines that should work in most cases for most brand-building strategies, but you really need to focus your efforts around your brand and customize them accordingly. To recap with a final overview, some useful tools that may help you build and maintain your brand's presence

online are provided below. Again, remember to mold the advice to your own situation and make your strategy work in favour of promoting your brand in a positive way.

If you're going to blog, do it often and do it well. Frequent updates with engaging content of high quality can help build that important brand trust while enabling you to establish and maintain an online community with a solid subscriber list.

Just like blogs, use emails to communicate regularly with your subscribers. It always comes down to quality over everything else so make sure you are providing value to your subscribers and not just spamming them with filler content just for the sake of it.

Consider your aesthetic. Whether it's emails, blog posts, or just your website itself, make sure your written content gels well with the rest of the layout, using images appropriately to brand yourself with visual appeal.

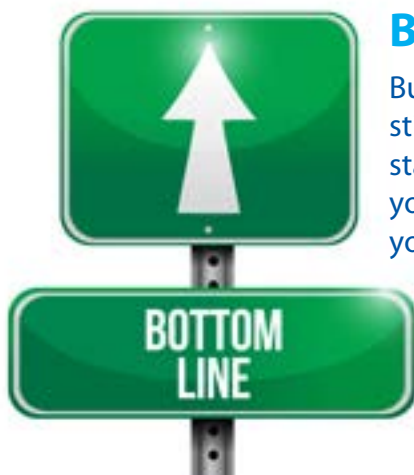
Many people prefer watching videos to reading content, and YouTube can be a great outlet of which you can make use. Create videos to promote your brand and place them as strategically as possible to get the views that will lead to more customers and greater brand recognition.

Make use of RSS feeds to keep up in the fast-paced environment offered by the modern internet, allowing you to stay up to date (and keep your stakeholders up to date) on your content and notifications.

Increase your site traffic through incoming links, building your brand with links and support from social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Use links to your advantage to repeatedly bring your brand into the conversation and make a name for yourself.

Along with the mobile optimization noted earlier in the guide, consider adding apps that highlight and promote your brand. The smartphone trend doesn't seem to be going away any time soon, so this app-based approach will help to embrace that.

Monitor your perception online on review websites, social media platforms, and even try using online research platforms to survey and poll users to see how you are perceived. Listen to the feedback you're getting and make adjustments to your branding strategy accordingly to get your brand to where you want it to be. Do this consistently for optimal results.



Bottom Line

Build your brand the way that works for your brand. Develop a strategy and stick to it, while also making the necessary adjustments along the way to stay on top of your branding and maximize the positive perceptions that your stakeholders have about your brand. Be diligent and stay focused on your customers, and your online branding strategy can work wonders for your brand.



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