

## Branding made simple....

This little book removes the rocket science and secrecy of branding activities so the little guys can compete with the big guys. With the affordable technology and services available online, any business or sole professional can launch their uniqueness with confidence. We, too, can become a big brand in our customers eyes very quickly and for the long haul, by creating a buzz with personality. Seed a new idea from the beginning or revitalize and breathe life into an existing business to ensure it's survival. This is a simplified definition and a basic model for branding based on our inherent creativity, that offers the small business professional hope for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The creative era we are now in demands change in marketing approaches, the stuffed-shirt days are gone, and being genuinely human is "in." You will discover that branding with style isn't just an activity for the big corporations with big budgets, and even better, you will find in today's marketplace, small businesses do have an edge!

The goal here is to enlighten you as to what's really going on out there, and enhance your already confident self (you started a business, after all), with even more confidence to effectively compete for your market share through a more satisfying and balanced solution - creative branding.



*grow*  
...21st century style

the **pH** little book of  
**BIG**  
brands

*a balanced solution  
to small business marketing  
in the 21st century*



This book is for those of you who never quite felt they fit into the mainstream of business culture, with the gut feeling that there was something more you needed to do.... enough to strike out on your own, believing and relying on yourself. Let's celebrate your gift of courage and creativity. We are in the perfect era to rise up and shine!

*To all of you who put up with my creative revelations and artistic waves over the years, as Tim and I fought with stubborn determination to find balance within a not highly valued industry. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your patience and shared devotion to creative balance, and being part of the pH fan club ...you all know who you are! ph*

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grow...21st century style



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# 1 Definition of brand

A combined definition according the “experts”: Brand is what your company or idea stands for and the value, experience and emotions that your audience associates with their experiences with you/your company. It’s a personality or a culture.

OK, true. But in terms we can understand and apply, please? What is a brand, ...really? To the “experts,” it has become a science of it’s own and it’s process is shielded from the small business professional. It has become one of those terms that is constantly evolving. It has become an inconsistent cliché in itself because of a lack of cohesion. Interestingly, that’s what brand stands for: a cohesive identity or personality. Everyone has their own definition of “brand,” and as more and more methodical business models by “experts” evolve around branding, it appears to become overwhelming and something the small business professional isn’t “allowed” to grasp.

Just as most everyone knows the Nike swoosh and what it represents, most also know the unique characteristics associated with the oak tree. Just like a firmly planted oak tree, a firmly planted brand, new or refreshed, presented within a quality, nourishing environment, will bring quality employees and customers, who in turn bring quality results and healthy **growth**.



A successful brand starts with the following 4 elements, which become your Brand Identity ..or, your unique stance in the marketplace.

## an icon, or logo

your brand’s shorthand for recognition. Your logo captures what makes your company unique and allows it to be quickly identified. It should be a reflection of what your company stands for and evoke the emotions and importance you are trying to portray.

## a voice

A written message, or slogan and tone of written copy standards that helps you and your target customers adhere to and understand your core selling points or ideals.

## a brand style sheet

A strict set of style guidelines for all visual and voice presentations from ad layouts, press releases, brochure design and content, e-signature, business cards, and all promotional pieces that preserve and guard your brand image in every contact it makes with your audience. This includes typeface style, color palettes, word themes, and logo placement.

## a brand map

An outline of the primary methods by which the message of your brand will be communicated to your current and potential customers (or touchpoints), when, where and how. This is also where a budget should be created and weighed against realistic goals and time frames. Your brand map should also identify the culture and personality within your service protocols and procedures, from your customers through your vendors.

Here are a few other jump-start terms to help you get up to speed with branding as your new marketing approach.

### Brand Personality/Culture}

the aura, or new idea your brand exudes toward everyone that is in contact with it, directly or indirectly. (word-of-mouth starts indirectly, but starts the culture).

### Brand police}

the representatives, or yourself. Those who guard each every exposure of your brand. The primary function of the brand police (or as some experts call the brand steward or manager) is to check over all communications and ensure that they align with the brand style sheet and brand map .

### Brand violation}

when your brand style or map is not followed as outlined. Examples of brand violations would be an ad that doesn't use the color palette chosen for your brand, or the typeface styles established, or, a press release or letter to a client may not express the tone of the brand's voice properly. Policing your brand is extremely important because it will ensure a reliability to your audience – a “look” they can always count on (by them always being able to find your phone number in a certain place, in a certain color, you exude an unspoken reliability).

### Brand equity}

the value your customers put on your brand. Their perceived value can only be increased with a unified image that is easily identified by the four elements of your identity - which essentially begin with how much YOU value your brand.

Now, we must understand today's consumer...

## 2 Meet today's SMARTsumer

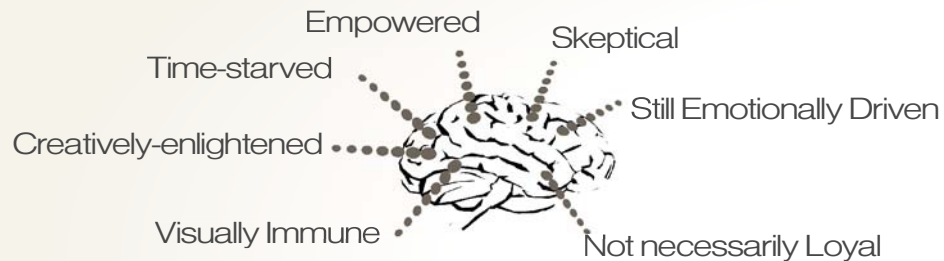
Just as the dot-com industry seemed to appear overnight, so has our recent creative intellectual revolution. There is a new mindset that leans to the inherent creativity in us all, and we demand such recognition. Creativity is now an asset. If you don't believe me, refer to endless research by Richard Florida in his book “Rise of the Creative Class.” The sooner the small business industry seizes this new-found freedom of mind, the realization that it's OK to be ourselves, the sooner we will reach our goals without it becoming a pride-swallowing siege. As an entrepreneur, I'm sure you've experienced the Jerry MacGuire syndrome once or twice!

This new creative mindset, and drive to go beyond making a buck, but also making a difference, is the best way to describe the marketplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I believe it is based directly on the personality of today's consumer, who we here at pH, now call the “SMARTsumer.” If you keep the 7 traits we've outlined at the top of your mind with everything you do, say and put forth regarding your brand, you're on your way to grasping success in today's marketplace. You will also find your work more satisfying.

Even better, once you realize that pretty much everyone (whether they like it or not) has evolved toward this new plane of thinking, you will experience freedom with standing for something unique and discover the confidence to put your stance forth in a way that comes naturally to you - this in turn will become contagious within you and those you come in contact with.

# today's SMARTsumer}

Hey!...we have another side of our brain, and we're no longer afraid to use it!



## Empowered {trait 1- a predominantly left-brain activity}

The internet has exploded with information about everything right at our fingertips. We have evolved into an extremely informed consumer, and know we have choices. The shields of many services have been unveiled, hence, the age of choices, of do-it-yourself, don't call me because you can't, don't e-mail me unless I ask you to, and don't try to trick me into the best deal because I'll look up other choices on the internet. We have evolved into the SMARTsumer. We see right through companies today, so you better be transparent and crystal clear about what you have to offer us, or we'll walk. Oh, and you better make it quick and to the point, because we're also...

## basic brain facts...

LEFT Side- logic, analytical, words and numbers.  
3 SMARTsumer traits

RIGHT Side - creative, shapes, colors, emotions  
4 SMARTsumer traits

## Time-starved {trait 2 - left brain}

Based on technology and the ability to do so much more, comes actually the good news for products and services that help save time. Today's SMARTsumer's time and how they spend it is valued over everything else. That precious commodity is what we all want to seize. The catch is, what we chose to do with our time must be of quality – whether it be a fulfilling DIY project or the experience of creating and sharing something with family and friends is priceless, because we are also...

## Creatively-enlightened {trait 3 - right brain}

People today want their individuality and creativity acknowledged. Our years of schooling where we primarily exercised just the left side of our brains are over. We need to be entertained, but also demand to be creative about our choices, and to have many of them. We are in a creative age that is so eloquently outlined by author Richard Florida ([www.creativeclass.org](http://www.creativeclass.org)). We want our purchase decisions to be creatively unique experiences, and demand to be involved with choices, ...and, you had better outline the options you're offering in an entertaining way because we are also...



## Visually Immune {trait 4 - right brain}

We are exposed to over 3,000 messages a day, and your business has 10 seconds. With Hummer ads, Cingular, and the masses of beautiful, well designed pieces, a company with a mediocre presence in a mass publication simply cannot expect to stand out, and a cheesy looking postcard will simply be discounted, especially if it appears to be addressing a generic audience. Today's society is skimming through the information overload, and we are accustomed to crisp, colorful icons and tight design as presented by big corporate brands. We not only expect it, but will only react with enthusiasm to such stylistic messages. However, we also skim those carefully because we are now...

## Skeptical {trait 5 - left brain}

The days of throwing out the best deal, satisfaction guaranteed, top-producer, or lowest price are over. The SMARTsumer is easily insulted by narcissistic marketing, mass messages that don't address their specific needs, or just plain look unprofessional. The façade of throwing out mass messages that don't specifically address our wants, needs and desires can actually harm your brand. The best deal out there is now viewed as "too good to be true"...unless it somehow relates to the SMARTsumer personally, forget it, because we are also...

## Still Emotionally Driven {trait 6 - right brain}

No matter how much we all want to say we think logically when purchasing (we still seek the best value – best product for the price), but demand a fulfilling experience also, and are willing to pay more for the experience and how doing business with a certain company makes us feel within. The brand we chose reflects on us as individuals. We want to be personally addressed, offering an aura we can't get anywhere else. Example, Starbucks...they can charge \$4 for a cup of joe because they have created that emotional value within the SMARTsumer. It's about perceived value, not just about lowest cost. The bling is still important, yet we will only do business with those who make us feel good about ourselves, those who are a reflection of our unique personality, and make us proud to show or tell our friends, which leads us to be...

## Not necessarily Loyal {trait 7 - right brain}

Today's SMARTsumer will take the best value – example, Charmin or Cottenelle...both super products, and then it comes down to price and availability. A service oriented example would be the closest, best tasting pizza with a smart price attached to it – today's SMARTsumer will pay more for the reliable, great tasting and great looking pizza sign and box when it's delivered to their home. Remember, you're not the only pizza gig, coffee shop, gift store, attorney, realtor or plumber in town.



Now that we are enlightened into this creatively intellectual revolution of the marketplace, it's time to start reaching out effectively...

### 3 relax...it's not rocket science!

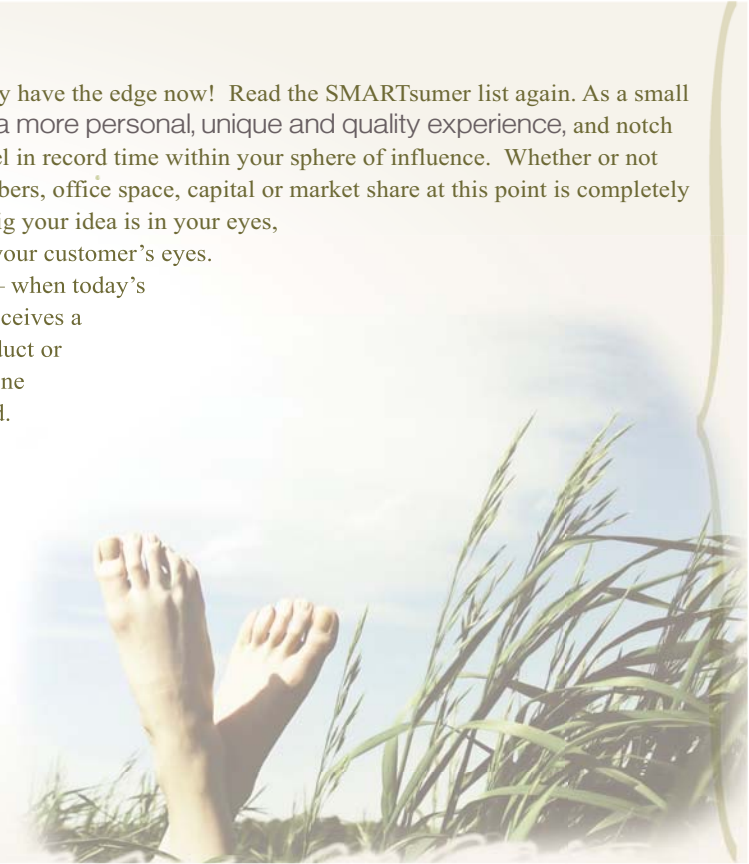
Now that brand is defined in layman's terms, and we're aware of the 21st century marketplace, we now must change our perception of branding - or adopt this marketing process if it's never been tried. It's not a secret, and no matter how many extensive brand models and methodologies are written in the big corporate scene, it still all comes down to understanding your own uniqueness and communicating it efficiently and effectively to the right people. Period. That's really it. Because a brand is built on uniqueness, every brand must build and follow it's own unique style and model through which it delivers it's niche qualities and characteristics.

Any business owner can take charge of their marketing in this century – it's just a matter of adapting to the evolving marketplace, keeping an open mind and simply going back to the primal reason for your business starting in the first place – back to the passion. If you can exude your passion and the uniqueness of what comes naturally with your product or service within every touchpoint accessible to your specific customer – you are branding your company. If you communicate the true personality and culture your product or service offers with a consistently attractive and professional style, you are effectively branding.

Small businesses can actually have the edge now! Read the SMARTsumer list again. As a small businesses, you can offer a more personal, unique and quality experience, and notch yourself up to big brand level in record time within your sphere of influence. Whether or not you're big in employee numbers, office space, capital or market share at this point is completely irrelevant – it's about how big your idea is in your eyes, and then perceived to be in your customer's eyes.

It's a word-of-mouth world – when today's demanding SMARTsumer receives a good experience from a product or service, it will travel via phone and internet at lighting speed.

You have to remember, it's the experience that is sought, and no matter how much a corporate giant saturates their brand, only a small business or individual can truly fulfill that personal and unique creative experience that is being sought.



# 4 the truth shall set us free}

Several recent truths about marketing and advertising will help you find a clear path into what can at times seem like a forest of information overload.

## 1. Traditional Marketing is Dead

Many marketing professionals of today need to start admitting this fact. What worked 5 years ago doesn't work so well these days, and will continue to be less effective over time. The marketing and advertising industries are being redefined at an even more lightning speed pace than usual, but you CAN keep up. Forget everything about what your specific industry says you should do, ...do your OWN thing! Make everything you send out there pure, stylish and genuine and not only will you get noticed, but you will find that you start to attract and retain higher quality fans, and more of them. It's now about showing your brand's human quality, about being transparent to your fans... you are here to offer something of value.

## 2. Mass Marketing is Dead

Generic messages presented in a mass fashion are completely out – in fact, when considering the traits of today's SMARTsumer can have a negative effect. It's so easy to get caught up in the fear of keeping up with the giants in their giant marketing. Remember, it's not about the size – it's about the quality – and let's face it, a creative age will not tolerate masses of mediocre messages that waste their priceless time. The message actually has to say something directly relevant to them, while creating that aura of uniqueness. There's nothing wrong with testing the waters with a small exposure initially - besides, it will allow your marketing budget to actually have the funds it needs when "you're on to something" that's getting a response - then send big. Now that you're into protecting your brand, do you really want to be associated with a "saver" pack ad that's thrown together when you're trying to establish a brand experience and raise the value of your product or service so it's worth the extra cost to your fans? Hello?

## 3. Canned doesn't cut it anymore

The old approach to save with templates, pre-designed postcards and backgrounds will no longer work for the emotionally driven SMARTsumer. Use nice stock templates, but make sure you have the freedom to eloquently and fluidly integrate your brand image. And, think about this as you protect your brand image and your "uniqueness" ...do you really want to risk being caught using a "canned" image your competitor used last week, or part of the herd of Microsoft template users? Remember, we're trying to be unique.



# 5 Seed It, Nourish It, Watch it Grow

Your brand grown properly will become the largest asset your company will ever have. It's a known fact that companies with strong brands are worth more. Did you know Coke attributes 80% of their profit margin directly to their brand? It's called brand equity, and boy are they cashing in on it. The fact is – treat it like your largest asset and you can't go wrong. Especially if you are savvy enough to look at the long-term plan of your company (unless you plan on having the stamina to run it yourself through your late 60s or 70s and then close it when you're done, leaving no mark on society whatsoever) – increasing brand equity is critical if you'd like to sell your business in the future, or document it's worth for any reason.

*the health of your brand relies on how much YOU value it first.*



## first, seed it}

The initial idea or concept of your business and its mission will directly lead to defining your audience. To solidify the mission statement in your business plan, along with analysis of market and budget are absolutely the essential ingredients to any successful business or idea. The only way your seed can be healthy enough to grow well in today's marketplace is by taking the time to do this.

Can you state what you or your company mission stands for in a sentence? What is the aura of your company, both internal and external? Do employees and those you work with really know what the brand stands for? What makes them different because they are associated with this brand? Instill a sense of family and then be very selective about where and how you expose your brand, through employee selection on down to your next postcard. Of course, the choices your company makes with regard to quality of the image, quality of voice, quality of the method of delivery, and the quality of audience is essential – and is all based on that healthy seed, and how much you value it.

The result of a well thought out brand with excellent design and communication objectives is growth. Your target audience will guide you to the next phase. Look at your brand like a sprout as it inches out of the soil and into the light - it needs the proper nourishment to grow into a strong plant that can handle its environment.

## second, nourish it}

Nourishing a brand starts once the seed is defined by the visual shorthand created by the elements of your brand identity. The elements are in place, your seed has sprouted, and it's time to nourish your brand. Continued value on professional design and creative writing will pay off. Remember, we are in a creative age. You have to keep it simple, making your message transparent to your customers and cut to the chase fast in order to capture their attention. You will immediately align yourself with the SMARTsumer by showing them that you value your brand and by exuding confidence with a professional image. Creativity is the big corporate secret – and it's not expensive if you hire smart. Hiring creatives is the efficient and cost effective way to not only help plant a healthy seed, but to nourish it so it stays strong. Professionals are trained to efficiently translate your brand's message through it's style elements (color, typeface, and clean and attractive graphics, quick voice) to your audience. Directing creatives to communicate and nourish your brand is not only a creative outlet for you, but an enriching experience that will save you time and mental agony when it comes time to deliver the message, and more than pay for itself once you experience the immediate results of your new confidence placed out there. The new respect and admiration from your sphere is worth it.

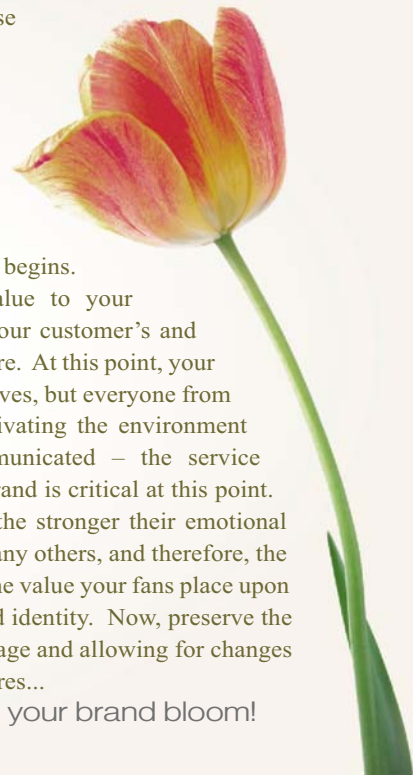
Your brand's visual elements and voice (the written, spoken message) are all you have when it comes to effective delivery. Since the SMARTsumer is still 80% emotional, which is a right-brained activity, the first emotional connection is visual - yes, a right-brained activity. Creative professionals have exercised this side of the brain, so use that creative muscle to strengthen your brand. Sometimes there can't be a written or spoken message,

and all your unique characteristics and associations a potential customer will rely on that first glimpse and first sentence...so nourish it well. Give them something they can relate to, spark their interest, make sure you keep it by repeating these almost magical elements of branding.

## third, cultivate and harvest it}

Once “out there”, the real brand establishment begins. This is where your brand truly offers it's value to your customers. Brand equity manifests itself from your customer's and employee's perspectives - the fans, the brand culture. At this point, your brand's fan club should not only be the top executives, but everyone from the employees to the customers. Carefully cultivating the environment through which your unique business is communicated – the service experience, and therefore, the perception of the brand is critical at this point. The stronger the connection with the customer, the stronger their emotional experience is when they choose you among the many others, and therefore, the stronger your brand becomes directly because of the value your fans place upon it. Coke is just another soda without the it's brand identity. Now, preserve the harvest (the fan club) by protecting your brand image and allowing for changes according to the customers' wants, needs and desires...

then watch your brand bloom!



# 6 small business, BIG branding

Let's ride the rapids of the changing, yet exhilarating market with style. Sure, change is difficult, yet being the thrill seekers you all are, putting yourself out there anyway - why not make it a fun ride? The smaller businesses think big branding is just for the giants...WRONG! Now that we know better as SMARTsumers ourselves, we can gain the confidence in the practice of effective branding by first gathering the information that's right at our own fingertips. The internet makes branding fairly simple and obtainable to the small business professional. Just like the SMARTsumer, you are empowered by the information on the internet, and you will discover that you have large negotiating power with vendors, too - they've actually caught on that small can grow big. You can research marketing options, vendors, etc., ...find the wants, needs and desires of your ideal

customers just by going to your industry blogs, relative online publications, and simply looking at the Sunday paper corporate ads and identifying what more you can offer. Then, get the top notch guidance and help from affordable pros that will help you communicate visually right up there with the giants in the paper – of course your delivery doesn't have to be an expensive mass delivery ...just a SMART one.

The challenge is to think big message to a smaller, niche audience.

You can still look big on a shoestring budget initially – but if anything is to be valued at the onset by your audience, you must at least have the guts to put forth a well-designed brand identity out there, by shifting marketing dollars wisely. The shoestring approach requires smart choices - or, SMARKeting. Before you take the plunge, there are two things you must let go of immediately...along with any inhibitions, of course!

## First, Not everyone is going to be a fan.

Remember that you can't get everyone. Part of being unique is having a unique audience. Your customers are more inclined to be loyal because you have something no one else can offer them that aligns with their personalities. As we all know from our high school experiences, not everyone jives. So don't expect everyone to jive with your brand...just look at it in the right perspective: it's OK to say you just want more business, but we all know the reality of trying to please someone who seems impossible. That extra business will cost you more in the long run if they are not in sync, or will not value what you have to offer them. So, let the ones who don't "get it" go for now - they will flock to you as your brand strengthens and expands while catering to the fans who appreciate you.

## Second, You cannot be a specialist at everything.

Part of our creatively enlightened era is specialization. When you specialize in something, you eventually become an expert. Stop trying to be everything to everyone - family experiences have probably taught you this lesson already. Just as you expect your audience to see you as a specialist, you will also need to acknowledge that there are specialists to design, write, print, place, and guide your brand to the big brand stature it deserves. Falling into the trap of do-it-yourself design software and web templates to present your largest asset, when you are not a specialist, is similar to downloading a program to fix your own transmission. Do you want to take that chance with such a large investment? Use the specialists out there, and your brand will undoubtedly show professionalism - and you get to focus on what you're best at!



# SMARKeting} the world is at your fingertips...literally.

Sending a quality message aligned with your brand image and audience, who's smaller, and more qualified, will cost less and bring better results. Ever throw out a message to a mass audience, along with a huge check, and hope for the best? Stop sweating, and send small and personal communications, until you know your customer's wants, needs and desires. You can effectively communicate and add value to your brand initially with a genuine message and personal presentation. And each and every presentation must not be compromised in standards. Yes, standards of what today's SMARTsumer is used to seeing – for a small business to stand above the big companies, it must look just as good. Today's technology allows for this – the key is to be consistent in the way you look just as much as in the delivery of your product and service. Your image must be something your customers or audience can't wait to show to others – something they are proud to say they are associated with. This is where brand equity starts. Your customers, associates and employees are always going to be your best advertising - yet, they are the creatively enlightened SMARTsumers, too. The part that most small business and professional services don't seem to get is that spending a couple of thousand in excellent design and setting high brand image standards raises a company's value immediately. Missing a few advertising spots or a mass campaign

in order to make a permanent difference for the rest of your company's lifetime and value suddenly becomes well worth the shift in your marketing budget.

Many small businesses make the mistake that a logo and maybe a color scheme is enough. Not when weighed up against what customers are seeing, hearing and reading from those branding properly, (and winning market share). Too many small business tend to look small minded. Most are honest, family-owned, and have such local flair and a specific niche as marketing advantages – but, in their rushed multi-tasked positions as small business owners, end up placing ads that look second-hand compared to the slick stuff out there. These genuine and reliable businesses get frustrated because they keep getting passed off, when all they have to do is get their image aligned with today's audience, then expose themselves in a quality, not quantity approach (which actually ends up costing their marketing budgets less in the long run). If you can only afford a logo to start, then do that first..and follow it's "look" the best you can, and demand that vendors do the same.

2. It's OK be different ...

You really do stand for something different, otherwise you wouldn't have had the guts and passion to start the business in the first place! – find that passion again. There was something you felt you could do better in the business. That's your seed...it's what you must communicate efficiently and effectively. And don't be afraid to put "you" into the brand identity – that is exactly what defined your business in the first place, and you want your fan club to be aligned with you. Compromise a bit, but not a lot. Don't be afraid to be you, you weren't afraid to go into business, right? With short-run print choices, you can easily test the waters with something completely different from what your industry normally does. You may not have the big bucks to one-up them on the traditional methods of marketing, but you can put yourself out there in such a unique way, you'll get noticed by the most important audience, your real potential fans. To make sure a creative venture like this is a success, and will not impede on how you are perceived, going with creative professionals will ensure that the spark about your brand will fly.



### 3. Once you go with pro's, you'll never go back

Walking into the world of creative professionals and computer geeks can seem like venturing onto unfamiliar terrain – like walking on the moon, maybe? However, the traditional views of this “wacky-bunch” are gone. These individuals have been providing the creative edge for the big corporate brands that dominate today’s marketplace for years. Balanced, productive creativity has become a precious asset. When aligned properly with business strategy, nothing can stop the potency professional creative services offer. The real pro’s are no longer shielded from the small business owner.

Recognizing and validating talent is the first step to brand balance: Think about those that just have that special “knack” at something..Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, DaVinci, O’Keeffe, Martha Stewart, Bill Gates...some are just more talented at certain things - and EVERYONE is born with an innate talent. Many just haven’t tapped in to it. At any rate, valuing what a truly talented pro who understands branding is your key to 21st century success.

Compare how much went into your last mass marketing campaign, or one month ad run in the paper, against the actual results and long-term perception. Aligned with today’s creative age, graphic artists, creative writers, and web guru’s, have a strong need to make a difference while making a living doing what they love - just like you (that’s why you’re starting your own business, remember?) We are seeking a more satisfying life experience -and cherishing the right brain activity that will fulfill that need.

*Balanced creativity will make your brand potent.*



Until recently, the incentives and validation of professional creativity have only been recognized by the bigger corporations. Many pro’s are freelancing today to be home with their families or simply to preserve and have the freedom to grow their talent – making them ready and willing to be recognized by the small business owner. A seasoned specialist has the experience and the talent to pull your passion about your business into a cohesive brand identity - and the best advertising, marketing, web and print providers are those who take time to respect and understand your brand style sheet and brand map. A real pro, from graphic designer, writer, printer to web developer will strive for this alignment. And yes, the good ones cost more, but will more than pay for themselves with the quality results their work will bring when combined with full brand activities. You would be amazed at the new negotiating power you will have with printers and media providers when they know you have a pro providing ready-made creative, and brand standards that hold them responsible for substandard work, saving you headaches, time and money.

Investment in the communication of your brand is the biggest part of branding. With a visually immune audience that’s very style/image driven...where do YOU think is the best place to put your investment? Be smart about your brand, and accept that visual identity is the first and primary touchpoint with your customer – if it’s genuine and a quality, professional impression that’s up there with big guys, you can’t go wrong. The fastest and most effective way to get toward big brand stature is to go with pro’s for your image. Writers, designers, and techy’s will bring the balance to your marketing, and directing creative projects can be a very enriching endeavor in itself – helping you tap into thinking outside the box. Many small business owners have discovered this realm, gutted out the unfamiliarity of it, and are now reaping the benefits to the point that they can’t imagine doing without it. Yes, creativity is contagious as the research on the SMARTsumer shows...and once you go with creative pro’s that help you balance your marketing activities and add potency to your brand, you’ll never go back.



# 7 it's all about the buzz}

The buzz comes from your customers and is back to the old-fashioned word-of-mouth marketing that the 21<sup>st</sup> century has re-birtherd...right along with flared pants and traditional family values (we always have to take the not-so-good with the good).

The fun part is creating a buzz about your brand. This takes time, period. Starting a brand on a shoestring budget can be done – growing a brand into what you intended it to be will involve constant interface with your customers. Always asking, probing directly about what they want, and be transparent about the fact that you are building your brand around them and their wants, needs and desires. Talk about giving them something to talk about to their friends, neighbors and family...a business that actually cares!

If your message delivers what your brand is, your product and service lives it, and the experience from you and any employees continually breathe out what your brand stands for, so will your customers...in a big brand way! So, create the buzz and let it fly! But, don't forget that...



# 8 evolution is inevitable

Allow your brand to evolve. Now you know many of those supposed brand “secrets” and the taboos are gone, and you understand that your brand is you, your product, your store, your service, and the result of what you present to your customers and how they in turn perceive you. Guard your brand carefully. Every single message must reflect or represent something for your customers. Never settle for less just because you're in a rush to hit an ad deadline. Negotiate with your media providers – and if they don't work with your pace, well, find another...there are many. Your brand will go full circle, and will evolve into what it is supposed to be according to the environment you create for it. All you have to do is allow yourself to grow with it, grow with your customers, continue to meet their wants, needs and desires...and then some. Part of evolving means experimenting, being prepared for all kinds of situations, and then of course, adapting in the most creative ways you can.

Something we all tend to forget – if you can dream it, you can make it happen.

Dreams come from the creative side of the brain, and the sooner you validate the creativity of your dream, the sooner your brand will become as big as your dream.

Happy branding!

