

# The Operational Side of Branding: Not Just Different, but Preferred

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If you consider branding only as it relates to your company graphics, signage, and promotional materials, then you are not allowing the full scope of branding to take your business to its next level of growth. Visually standing out with a distinctive logo and consistent graphics is an essential aspect of branding. But it is only one aspect of *effective* branding. Effective branding also considers and leverages how you communicate, conduct, and operate your business within the marketplace. Just as you desire to take your business to its next level, it may be time to take your branding to the next level as well.

## FOUR KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL BRANDING

Is your business effectively and consistently implementing the four aspects of branding? Your branding should be distinguishing your business on a visual, verbal, physical, and personal level. Answer these questions to assess if you are doing an effective job.

**1 VISUAL PRESENCE:** Does your company have a distinctive logo graphic—including the colors being used—compared to your competitors? Does your company have graphics branding standards that dictate logo usage and colors, as well as acceptable and unacceptable variations? Do you have guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable font styles and colors to be used in communications and promotional materials? Do you have guidelines for complementary graphics which will be used with the logo in promotional initiatives?

**2 VERBAL PRESENCE:** Does your logo graphic or company's history have a special story behind it and are you telling this story? Does your logo graphic represent specific aspects of how you do business differently and is this reinforced in your written communications? Have you defined a distinctive mission statement, vision, and tagline for your business? Have you defined critical, distinguishing words that are to be consistently used in communications? Have you distinguished how your business is different from competitors in your writing and promotional copy? When asked about

your business, does your 30-second introduction immediately create a memorable distinction for your business?

**3 PHYSICAL PRESENCE:** Do you carry your visual branding into your place of business through décor, colors, and unique, detailed touches? Is your mission or philosophy posted for customer viewing in your business? Do you wear logo-branded apparel to reinforce your brand or accessories that reinforce a branded symbol about your company? Does your place of business inspire a certain feeling or emotion when





## Beyond the Product: Identifying Core Competencies

A niche manufacturing company that produced fabrics for clean-room garments had reached a plateau in sales as a market leader. Growth needed to be realized through additional products or offerings. But management continued thinking in terms of the clean-room industry serving pharmaceutical and microchip environments until a consultant helped identify their true core competency. It wasn't that they were the best at producing clean-room garment fabric. Their core competency was that they were highly skilled at handling unique fabrics requiring special production to effectively exist in unique environments.

With this now the basis of next-level thinking, they partnered with a research-and-development source specializing in unique fabrics in a variety of industries to identify any emerging or missed opportunities. The company has evolved from a manufacturer to a products engineering company.

This resulted in expansion with patented fabrics into a vari-

a customer or prospect enters? How are you creating a level of differentiation that is at the core of what makes you the best choice to serve your market?



**PERSONAL PRESENCE:** Have you defined and documented the actual experience you want your customers to have in doing business

ety of markets including health-care and hospitality bedding, industrial laundry, and transportation comfort products. In the nursing-home environment, their engineered fabric is used for bedding with documented evidence of reducing pressure ulcers in patients by 80 percent. In the hospitality industry, the fabric dries 40 percent faster than cotton and does not require bleach to sterilize due to its antimicrobial infrastructure, resulting in cost savings in laundering and labor.

By understanding what they truly were doing better than anyone else, they have exponentially expanded their presence and their business with products no one else is producing. The company supports this with branding that leverages all aspects of what distinguishes the business every step of the way.

*Example source: MarketSource, consulting for White Knight Engineered Products Inc.*

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with you? Have you defined the emotions and feelings that you want your customers to experience by using your products or services? Do your customers rave about their experience with customer testimonials, success stories, and referrals? Is there a buzz occurring about your business because the experience you offer cannot be replicated anywhere else?

## CORE COMPETENCIES FOR BRANDING INNOVATION, DISTINCTION


Another key aspect of branding is to define the core competencies which truly differentiate your business. Too often, this is only assessed on a surface level. Don't confuse your competencies with what you offer in products or services. Dig a bit deeper to get to the core of what you do better than anyone else.

Is there a unique process you use to deliver your products or services? Have

you packaged your offerings in a way that is distinctive according to different market segment needs and uses? Do you have a specific expertise or technical ability that is solving a problem no one else in the industry has been able to solve? Can this same knowledge be adapted to another industry? Have you distinguished these processes, systems, programs, or specialized expertise with their own branding? Have you sought protection of these distinctions as intellectual property through a trademark or patent?

Branding at its most effective level reinforces your ability to out-perform, out-smart, and out-think your competition to

Is there a **unique**  
**process** you use  
to **deliver** your  
products or services?

gain preference and loyalty from your target markets. Companies that understand this are flourishing, shifting to opportunities that no one else is addressing effectively in current markets and new markets. When you interweave branding into the way you do business, why you do business, and how you do business, then you truly have embraced the power it possesses to grow your business. 

**SHERRÉ DeMAO**, an author, expert strategist, and chief marketer focused on entrepreneurs, is an Enterprising Women Advisory Board member and 2007 winner of the Enterprising Women of the Year Award. Her books "50 Marketing Secrets of Growth Companies" and "Me, Myself & Inc." are available through Amazon and Barnes & Noble. She can be reached at [sherre@sldunlimited.com](mailto:sherre@sldunlimited.com) or 704-483-2941. For more information on her books, visit [www.50marketingsecrets.com](http://www.50marketingsecrets.com) or [www.memyselfandinc.com](http://www.memyselfandinc.com).



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