

meister:
Suffix denoting
a professional
practitioner

ProfitMeister

MAXIMIZING YOUR MARKETING MONEY

VOL. 9, #4

Brand it! Communicate with Design, Color, Style and Planning!

"I've got ideas galore to take home and strengthen my brand."

Jan Scott,
President/CEO,
St. Louis
Publishers, Inc.

- ◆ *"I've got 300+ names on my list; it's time to start a newsletter."*
- ◆ *"Now that the new website is up we need to publish a newsletter. There are more than 8,000 customers on our list."*

In these situations, a significant event or milestone became the starting point for an image makeover.

The reworking of a website, the addition of a newsletter or another collateral material effort invites a discussion of branding. Oftentimes business owners never address the cohesive presentation of materials, instead adding item after item with little thought to overall impact.

What is brand?

Branding—who you are, what you stand for, and how that information is communicated to others as a total identity—is for everybody and every size of company.

"Creating a good brand saves time and frustration," according to Maria G. Nozza, a professional freelance graphic designer and branding expert. "Your brand is the first impression you create

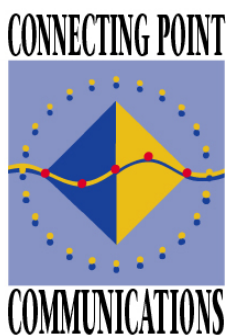
with your clients." "But nobody really tells you how to do it."

How to begin to brand

Experts agree the heart of branding is the customer. Identify your audience. Maria uses the example of a doctor or professional provider who picks Comic Sans for a font. The informality of this font affects the credibility of the business using it. A similar disconnect can occur with color. A bank uses dark green as opposed to chartreuse because the dark green conveys more wealth, prestige and solidity.

"You really need to know your audience," Maria said. "It's not just about the look you're striving for. It's what your competitors are doing and why you're different. If you have a real brand I'll know as I glance at an email..."

In an interview with ProfitMeister, Maria discussed the advantages of a polished look. Your company brand reflects the totality of your business. Well-designed information speaks volumes for credibility. Begin planning with an outline listing every part of your outreach: newsletters, website, special reports, tip sheets, white papers, postcards, brochures, labels, etc.



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□ Mary Ellen Merrigan

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Then, develop a system to address business design. Creating templates to outline or structure your visuals for easy replication will save you time and effort. Once you develop a series of templates, it's easier to add collateral pieces because the pattern is already there.

A cohesive look involves design, color and style. Maria discussed how each component relates to impression.

Design

Like most graphic designers, Maria suggests common design themes or looks. "Design communicates your brand at a glance."

"It's almost as if a person can look at your website or your collateral and know they're "family," she said.

"There's an underlying relationship woven through everything."

Design gives a business an advantage she explained, because materials become familiar and recognizable on and offline. Repetitive elements such as a thick line, a certain bullet, the font headings, provide focal points to catch the reader's eye and draw it through the text.

Color

Maria talked about color in design and as a repetitive element. "Color is all around you," Maria says. "Color speaks volumes without saying a single word."

A website built in primary colors, for example, doesn't work if the primary audience is elderly. On the other hand, primary colors could be extremely effective for children.

Financial institutions use colors like burgundy rather than bright red, or dark green as opposed to chartreuse. The darker colors appear stronger and are more easily associated with wealth and prestige.

Maria suggests two to three colors (excluding photos) for most websites. "Less is more when it comes to color," she says.

Style

Style integrates design and color. Once again Maria emphasizes the importance of considering the target. If an audience is upscale, quality becomes even more important. A financial services company might choose heavy, refined paper to reflect its style.

"I think of style like glue," she said. "It holds everything together. Little things command attention. Style makes it pop! It's more than a look; it's a feel, a relationship, a brand."

Conclusion

Maria's takeaway: settle on design, color and style and then develop templates. Not only will you save an incredible amount of work, you'll develop a consistent brand that communicates professionally on a non-stop basis.

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This quarter's ProfitMeister newsletters and blog posts tackle the subject of publishing for your audience. We'll showcase resources and share shortcuts we've discovered. Send comments by e-mail: maryellen@profitmeister.com.