

YOUR BRAND: **UNRIVALED ... OR** **UNRAVELED?**

A business self-assessment guide to help you
build awareness, create interest and drive growth





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What's a Brand?

From your perspective as a marketer, your brand identifies your company or organization's value and reputation. It defines your products or service categories and differentiates you from your competitors.

To a buyer, it represents an emotional attachment (or detachment) to the promises you've made to deliver on benefits like quality, service, price and satisfaction. Given that consumers are exposed to thousands of marketing messages each day across an ever-growing number of channels, brands must be able to distinguish themselves in the marketplace to even be noticed. A strong brand stimulates purchase, re-purchase and ultimately, long-term and profitable customer loyalty and advocacy.

Helping you tie it all together

Brand strength is built through countless consumer touch points. As awareness grows, brand preference increases more rapidly.

Those who do it best deliver consistent brand messages and reliable excellence across many experiences. And it pays off. According to Econsultancy, multi-channel customers spend three to four times more than those who interact on a single channel.

Brand management is a wide and deep discipline that we won't attempt to cover in this brief guide. Rather, our goal is to help you do a quick self-appraisal of your current activities that should be working toward building and maintaining a

powerful brand. How? By presenting a series of simple self-assessment questions based on generally accepted best practices in six key branding areas, including:

- 1 Brand Identity: Your Logo**
- 2 Printed Materials**
- 3 Interior & Exterior Signage**
- 4 Trade Shows & Events**
- 5 Web Presence**
- 6 Content Marketing**

One more reason for conducting this self-assessment?

Protection. Over time, it can be tempting to make compromises in how your brand is presented . . . only to weaken it and jeopardize recognition and preference. Top marketers don't take chances with their branding, and neither should you.



Brand Identity: Your Logo

A logo employs shape and color to instantly bring a brand to mind, but it's only one element of your brand identity. Additional components such as your brand name, tagline and usage guidelines will also influence the way buyers perceive your company or organization.

Even top marketers have made some infamous missteps with logo re-designs. (Remember the new Gap?) Be aware that it's your target market who ultimately determines whether or not your logo accurately portrays your brand identity and product or service category ... and if it resonates positively.

Some considerations when assessing your logo and brand identity basics:

Check one

YES NO

- Does your logo accurately reflect the scope of your organization?** Has your German car service expanded to include British and Italian makes? Do you now include home repairs along with painting? If your business has evolved, perhaps your logo should, too. Sometimes, that means a simpler design. Big brands like Pepsi, Apple and Xerox, all have simplified their logos.
- Have you specified your logo's colors and typefaces?** Hues are most often expressed in Pantone® colors – like PMS 185 – and typefaces in specific fonts (Helvetica Neue). To ensure a consistent look, insist on consistent use of your specified elements.
- Do you have a memorable brand name?** Types include descriptive (HomeGoods), acronyms (ESPN), arbitrary (Apple) or metaphor (Twitter). Beware: Generic words without other identifiers are difficult to trademark and protect.
- Does your brand identity include a tagline – a phrase that captures its essence?** It should be short, unique and easy to remember. It can be an abstract concept, directly tied to your logo, a benefit statement or make a brand promise. Here are a few you'll recognize: You're in good hands (Allstate), We move the world (DHL), When you care enough to send the very best (Hallmark).
- Are you protecting your logo from misuse?** If you have multiple offices or locations, it can be difficult to maintain brand consistency in sales and marketing materials. Do you have a brand identity standards manual that outlines correct and prohibited uses of your service marks, including your logo? Do you enforce it?

Analysis

The foundation of my company's brand(s), including the logo(s):

- Needs improvement. Is solid.

Do you have a Mission Statement? A declaration of the purpose of a business or organization and its reason for existing, a well-written mission statement will help your team maintain your brand identity.

Printed Materials

Used to market a product or service (brochures, direct mail), identify an organization or members of it (letterhead stationery, business cards), or provide information to key constituents (newsletters, annual reports, case studies), printed materials are integral to almost all business operations.

Marketers take note: Research firm Millward Brown¹ presented a study that got people talking about how the brain responds differently to physical and virtual stimuli. The research revealed that engagement with a physical piece prompts more brain activity than with digital views. This suggests that it's more "real" and involves more emotionally vivid memories which may help with brand recall and motivation.

Some considerations when evaluating your printed materials in terms of your brand messages:

Check one

YES NO

- Are you maintaining a consistent brand voice?** Perhaps it's friendly and conversational, as you'd expect from a preschool. Alternately, the tone could be serious and informative if from a manufacturer of pharmaceuticals.
- Is direct mail part of your marketing mix?** Even in this digital age, 73% of U.S. consumers and 67% of Canadian consumers say they prefer direct mail for brand communications, according to Epsilon's *2012 Channel Preference Study*.
- Are you using your printed materials to optimum advantage?** While few can argue that Web strategies are effective, many will agree that there's no substitute for distributing sales brochures at the point of purchase, flyers and imprinted items at events, or mailing special offers to customers and prospects. Multi-channel campaigns that combine print and digital – like a direct mail campaign with a landing page for lead capture and offer download – are best.
- Have you conducted a recent audit of your printed materials – and those of your key competitors? Are any items in need of updating?** For example, is the heating and cooling business across town eating into your maintenance work with a series of seasonal newsletters? Avoid the mistake of letting your tried and true pieces become old and tired.
- Do you use an online print management system to control your brand assets?** Today's Web-to-print tools offer greater brand control, message personalization and tracking functions to measure what gets used and what does not. According to research by InfoTrends, users of online print ordering and management systems reported an average savings of more than 14% in print-related costs as a result of using these systems.²

Analysis

My printed marketing collateral and sales materials:

- Need to be refreshed or re-designed. Are current and well-executed.

¹ Millward Brown, *Using Neuroscience to Understand the Role of Direct Mail, 2009*

² InfoTrends, *Capturing the SMB Marketing Automation Opportunity, 2012*



Interior & Exterior Signage

The execution may be oversized, but it can still be overlooked. A University of Cincinnati (UC) analysis of a market research survey of over 100,000 North American households discovered that shoppers are not only attracted to stores but also make key quality inferences on the basis of signage.

Signs at a company location enhance the store image, communicate the nature of the business, help attract customers and can drive impulse sales. Sign attributes to consider? The most effective are clearly readable, conspicuous in placement and size, and have strong branding elements.

Small and mid-sized businesses without a retail presence will likely still have a need for signs and banners. Company meetings, special events, seminars and fundraisers all call for oversized posters and banners.

Some considerations when evaluating your signage in terms of your branding:

Check one

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you devoting enough resources to indoor signage – including POP displays, banners, wall and floor graphics, window posters and more? Look beyond your four walls; oversized graphics can be installed on nearly any surface. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you made the most of your outdoor signage opportunities? Capture drive-by and on-street attention with colorful window clings and banner stands. Window graphics are easily swapped in and out for special or seasonal promotions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is your outdoor signage large enough for passers-by to recognize? The UC analysis notes that nearly 50% of American consumers failed to find a business when driving because its signage was too small or otherwise unclear. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is your signage up to date? UC found that 75% of businesses changed the design of their signs in the past five years, selecting a new look, new type or new illumination. Are your competitors among those who've updated? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you considered mobile signage in the form of wraps or repositionable magnetic signs for your cars, vans, trailers and even leased vehicles? Research shows there is no more cost-effective way to drive consumer impressions than with transit graphics. |

Analysis

My interior and exterior signage:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is showing some wear and tear. | <input type="checkbox"/> Is vibrant, eye-catching and comprehensive. |
|---|--|

Are you going – and growing – digital? Available in a dazzling selection of indoor and outdoor options, digital signs receive up to 10 times more eye contact than traditional static signage.

Source: 2012 Digital Signage Business Conference

Trade Shows & Events

Be it a display at a trade show, an exhibit at a sales conference or staging your own special event such as a grand opening or tent sale, face-to-face marketing (experiential branding) is an important part of branding efforts for many businesses and organizations.

If your brand is not yet established, trade shows and other events can help level the competitive playing field, providing exposure in front of the largest and most attractive prospects. Experts say most small to mid-sized businesses that are considering exhibiting at trade shows should start with well-established events that can provide verified past attendance that aligns with their target audiences. Reviewing lists of past exhibitors can tell you if your competitors or others interested in reaching the same prospects find the show valuable.

Some considerations when evaluating your trade show and event participation in terms of your branding:

Check one

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | When not exhibiting, do you repurpose your displays? GES's <i>2014 Trend Tracker</i> report on trade shows notes that marketers are extending the life of their exhibits by installing them at headquarters as briefing centers or in other aspects of their marketing programs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is direct marketing the cornerstone of your promotion? You don't want everyone to attend your event or visit your booth, just the people who fit your target profile. Build a direct marketing campaign to efficiently target the prospects you want to see, and avoid paying to reach those you don't. Postcard mailings are an affordable way to mail several times before the show. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are your giveaways memorable and/or useful? Logo items (wearables, USBs, pens and notepads) can be an inexpensive way to extend your brand beyond the show. Also consider offering your best prospects the chance to receive a valuable "thank you" gift if they schedule a follow-up sales presentation in their office. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are your booth staff positive brand ambassadors? Trade shows can be chaotic. A friendly, well-informed team in easily identifiable logowear is an attractive and welcomed relief. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you integrating your efforts with social media? Reach more people by creating event pages on LinkedIn and Facebook. Your social presence will also enhance your visibility in online search results. During and after the show, stay in touch with your followers by posting social updates, breaking news and ongoing commentary from your experts. |

Analysis

My trade show exhibit and other event promotional materials:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are due for an update. | <input type="checkbox"/> Effectively promote my brand. |
|---|--|



Web Presence

In today's digital marketplace, most marketers need a "be where they go" strategy when prospects search for their goods or services. Your approach should accommodate desktop users and those who access the Internet via mobile devices.

A website is a "must-have" for small and mid-sized businesses and nonprofits. They can be developed economically without short-changing essential programming and content that enhances recognition by search engines. Your Web marketing can include a combination of organic (natural) and paid search (pay-per-click) strategies that help your organization to be found online and drive traffic to your website.

Some considerations when evaluating your Web presence in terms of your branding:

Check one:

YES NO

- Does your website achieve low rankings on search engines, such as Google, when common search terms are used, making it difficult to find you?** If so, your site is probably in need of search engine optimization (SEO).
- Is your site optimized for mobile use?** Google estimates that 40% of searches from iPhones and Droids are local (e.g., pet supplies, Pittsburgh), yet only 10% of websites are optimized for smartphones with narrower, more easily readable columns and simplified content.
- Do you maintain a Web presence on local maps of the major search engines?** Most of these local listings are free; they simply need to be "claimed" on local maps such as bing.com/local or listings.local.yahoo.com, among others.
- Are you on Facebook?** If not, you probably should be. According to BaliHoo, no fewer than 91% of local searchers use this leading social media channel to find nearby businesses online!
- Are you employing email in your digital branding efforts?** It's likely your competitors are! According to StrongView's *2014 Marketing Trends Survey*, 52% of companies planned to increase their email marketing spend for 2014 – giving it greater importance than all other tactics for customer nurture. Add a Join My Mailing List tab to your website for opt-in digital communications. It helps to make your site more "sticky," meaning visitors stay longer.

Analysis

My Web presence:

- Could be stronger and more strategic. Fully supports my offline branding.

Do you have a presence on Pinterest, LinkedIn or Twitter? Along with Facebook, these social media sites are highly regarded. BaliHoo reports that 59% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.

Content Marketing

According to HubSpot, 48% of marketers planned to increase their inbound marketing spending in 2013, the third year in a row that inbound budgets increased at or near a 50% pace.³ The most common content marketing tactics – videos, white papers, infographics, webinars, podcasts and blogs – are those that are readily sharable via your website or social media pages.

The best content is non-promotional and answers the questions seekers may have before they even ask them. TIP: Maximize your research and writing by repurposing your content across multiple channels. A white paper, for example, can be the primary source of content for shorter blogs, quick social posts and top-line fact sheets.

Some considerations when evaluating your content marketing in terms of your branding:

Check one

YES NO

- Do you have a documented content strategy?** According to the Content Marketing Institute, 44% of B2B companies and 39% of B2C companies do and use an average of 13 and 10 tactics respectively, like social media, articles on their websites, in-person events, webinars and case studies. Further, 58% (B2B) and 60% (B2C) plan to increase their content marketing budget over the next year.^{4,5}
- Do you blog?** HubSpot reports that small businesses that blog get 55% more website visitors and 126% higher lead growth than non-blogging businesses. Why are they so effective? Blogs drive search engine traffic with fresh content and provide a channel for instant customer feedback, allowing you to gauge and react to the posts that get the most interest.
- Are you turning content sharing into a game?** Many marketers are asking social site fans to vote on consumer-submitted content such as photos, videos or alternate creative entries. Others are incentivizing content submissions, sharing or sign-ups with contests and prizes. Outside of a contest, produce tip sheets, white papers and slides that are easily passed along.
- Where do you stand with video?** According to the third annual *Reel SEO Video Marketing Survey*, 93% of marketers used video as part of their strategy in 2013. Video assets can be used throughout the sales funnel, focusing meaty content when people are looking to learn about your product or service.
- Are you tracking your top influencers (fans and followers)?** Reward the most loyal with a first choice of a new product or other exclusive incentives.

Analysis

My content marketing:

- Needs stronger integration with other channels. Is at peak performance.

³ HubSpot, *2013 State of Inbound Marketing Annual Report*

⁴ Content Marketing Institute, *B2B Content Marketing 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends – North America*

⁵ Content Marketing Institute, *B2C Content Marketing 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends – North America*



Your Brand: Final Assessment

Brand-building activities are strategic, consistent and essential to the long-term health of a business or organization. Whether your business goal is to grow sales, increase donations or reach new markets, a strong brand that is tied together across all customer touch points will help carry you there.

As the final step, refer to your analysis of each of the six key branding areas in the previous pages that are also listed below. Now, check the boxes on the areas where you could be performing better in the final assessment found here. We're also giving our top recommendation in each category to help you build a "to-do" list to better branding!

Areas where I can strengthen my brand:

Check all that apply

- Brand Identity, including Logo**
Do this! Conduct an internal audit. Pull samples of all your branded materials and content – offline and online. Chances are, they were produced at different points during the lifetime of your business. Make three stacks: keep, revise and toss.
- Printed Materials**
Do this! Include print in the mix. Epsilon's 2012 Channel Preference Study for Both Mobile and Non-Mobile Consumers showed more than 60% of North Americans said they get a lot of email that they just don't open, and they enjoy checking the mailbox for postal mail. Plan a targeted direct mail campaign and test offers.
- Exterior & Interior Signage**
Do this! Be your own worst critic. Look for signs of wear and tear. Faded? Replace it. Torn? Take it down. While you're at it, consider a fresh coat of paint, frame new posters and apply promotional clings to sparkling clean windows.
- Trade Shows & Events**
Do this! Have follow-up collateral ready to go. According to the Event Marketing Institute, 93% of trade show attendees said it's "okay" for the sponsor to send them post-event direct mail and advertising.
- Web Presence**
Do this! Get a mobile site. Studies reveal that at least 70% of smartphone users expect a mobile site to render just as quickly as their desktop, and 57% of consumers would not recommend a business with a bad mobile site. Give on-the-go searchers the basics, and include a link to your full site.
- Content Marketing**
Do this! Be social. Being on Facebook and other social media can boost exposure in search engine results. This makes you more visible to consumers searching for a business like yours – whether they search on social media or via standard search engines.

Some of you will be able to implement several or all of this guide's recommended actions on your own. Of course, others will need the assistance of an experienced and capable partner.

If you need help with your checklist, we invite you to check us out!

About Allegra



Allegra is locally owned and operated. Our focus is on small and medium-sized businesses and other organizations that need printed and online communications. We offer integrated solutions to help you build a strong brand through customer data analytics support, campaign planning, website development and optimization, mobile marketing, online marketing, email and direct mail marketing, targeted mailing lists, cross-channel campaigns, social media marketing, dedicated referral programs, point-of-purchase and out-of-store displays, posters and signage, literature and handouts, promotional items, logo wear and more.

Beginning with a clear understanding of your business goals and challenges, we'll help you determine how to better know your best customers or donors and grow them. We'll help you precisely identify your targets, develop a multi-channel strategy to reach them, and ensure that every activity achieves maximum impact with minimum waste to achieve your sales or other goals. And, we'll implement your program efficiently and effectively to drive the desired results within your timeline and budget.

Want to Learn More?

Contact your Allegra representative today for a free, no-obligation consultation.



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Looking for more marketing insights?

For best practices and new ideas to help your business grow, talk to an Allegra professional about these other valuable resources. Just ask us for a printed or digital copy; we'll be happy to deliver it to you.

The Definitive Web Marketing Guide:

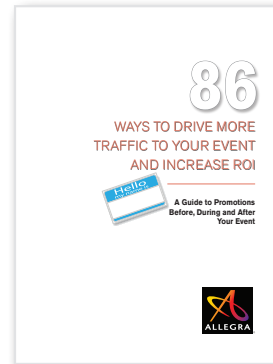
Proven Strategies for Top-Performing Websites



Make your website a powerful tool to connect, inform, engage and sell.

86 Ways to Drive More Traffic to Your Event:

A Guide to Promotion Before, During and After Your Event



These sure-fire techniques from event industry insiders will boost traffic and results from your next event or trade show.

The Ultimate Direct Mail Marketing Guide:

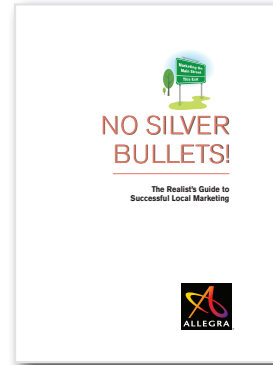
Proven Tips and Techniques You Can Use Today



Learn how to break through the clutter and create powerful direct mail campaigns that reach the right people with the right message.

No Silver Bullets:

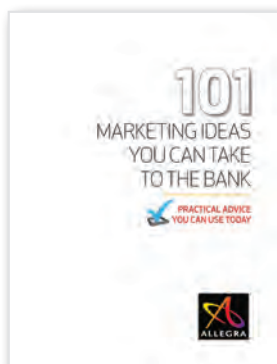
The Realist's Guide to Successful Local Marketing



Use these six cross-channel strategies to find more local customers and drive new sales.

101 Marketing Ideas You Can Take to the Bank:

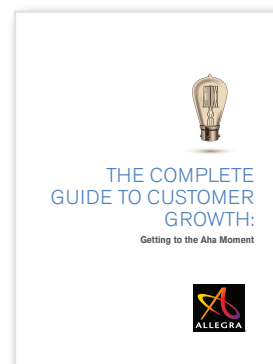
Practical Advice You Can Use Today



These proven tactics will improve your marketing effectiveness from the first page. Get started now on your way to more sales.

The Complete Guide to Customer Growth:

Getting to the Aha Moment



Gain a better understanding of your best customers and use that information to strengthen your relationships and grow new sales.