



Branding

Advertising Your Brand

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Once you've created your brand, after careful research and planning, you now need to get yourself out there. The size of your company doesn't matter and neither does what product or service you offer. The idea of putting yourself out there publicly and making enough noise to be noticed can be daunting. You will probably feel like a tiny fish in an ocean. But, don't worry, every company goes through the same first steps. The difference in being noticed, however, takes careful planning and consideration. Some companies take time to build up momentum while others seem to be heard overnight. Is there a secret to that formula? Yes and no. First, look at your market and industry. Technology is a medium that is in a constant state of evolution and if you do the research, you might hit upon a new social media platform or advertising source before it gets big and becomes the next Twitter or Facebook. However, don't put all of your eggs in one basket. I remember once, a very social media

savvy director of a company I worked for thought that Google+ was going to be the next big thing when it was first introduced. He was convinced it was going to surpass Facebook in popularity. That was five years ago and it still hasn't happened. There's not to say that it won't, someday. However, if a new company had the same idea he did and put all of their advertising resources into that platform alone, they would have wasted a lot of time and money. So, yes, look for those trends, those "next big things" but don't forget about what already works. Even if these options are being heavily used by your competitors. Be smart. Learn the ins and outs of these advertising vehicles, become an expert and you may just surpass your competitors in being noticed. Let's first go over the various ways, besides technology that you can set your brand up for success when it comes to being noticed.



A Powerful Presence is Key

A powerful physical

This one may be difficult for some companies that are either small or only provide a service. Their office may be located in a bigger building shared by other companies and they may not even be big enough to have a sign on the building or the building's marquee. So how do they go about having a noticeable physical presence? Every industry, these days has their conventions, or public events that allow for physical exposure. Find out what is available for your industry and get a booth there, have the best of your employees attend to represent your company and reach the public. If there truly is nothing, start one of your own. Another avenue would be to sponsor a local event. You know where your market will be and what interests they have. A sponsorship will get your name out and allow you to provide a physical presence. Once again, if there isn't anything available, don't let that stop you from putting one on yourself. What shared value do you have with your market? Use that as a resource to find a common cause that you can create an event around.

If you do have a physical location where your clients can visit, make sure it is in a convenient location and that it goes beyond their expectations. When they walk in, they should get the most out of their experience with your company's staff and the general environment. Having a powerful physical presence, is more than just being there. Look at your mission statement, your physical presence in the industry should embody that. If you want your customers to relate to you, find a way to connect with them.



Intellectual Appeal

Many companies attempt to launch themselves into the market based purely on emotional appeal or connections with their clients. However, much like the different avenues of advertising available, you don't want to put all of your eggs in one basket. Don't discount the value of connecting with your market on an intellectual front. With information so readily at our fingertips, we can easily become experts in many subjects. Don't assume that this newfound digital age has turned everyone's brain to mush. Your market wants their intellect to be noted and respected. In order to connect with your market on an intellectual level consider the following questions about your company.

- How are you different from your competitors?
- How do you want your customers to view you?
- How is the voice and opinions of your company unique?

By identifying these specific traits of your company, you can begin to put together an underlying theme or message that resonates across the board in every piece of communication or advertisement that you put out as a company. Your medium for connecting and getting your message out could be through a company blog, e-newsletter, or even posts to social media. Put the spotlight on shared values that you have with your audience and make sure that all of your messages have the same underlying tone to stay cohesive. Don't use jargon, but don't dumb down the message too much either. Respect the intelligence of your audience and they'll respect you as a company.



Social Media is your friend.

Build a valuable presence in social media. As I mentioned earlier, if you want to be innovative and take risks, don't hesitate to try out one of the latest platforms, but don't neglect the established ones either. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Instagram are all really great platforms to advertise and give your brand a voice. You don't have to have an account with each platform. Choose what fits your market the best. Also, don't fall into the trap of putting one post out on every single platform at the same time—all the time. Vary your content between platforms. Your company may

have big news in regards to what you provide, or you may want to advertise the latest post on your company's blog. Those are the types of posts that need to go out across the board. However, don't hesitate to also invest in having a few smaller posts that are just for a specific platform. For instance, not all Twitter and Pinterest users are created equal. Understand the difference between the two clientele and be specific with them. If they do happen to follow you on both platforms, they will see your attention to detail and be impressed.

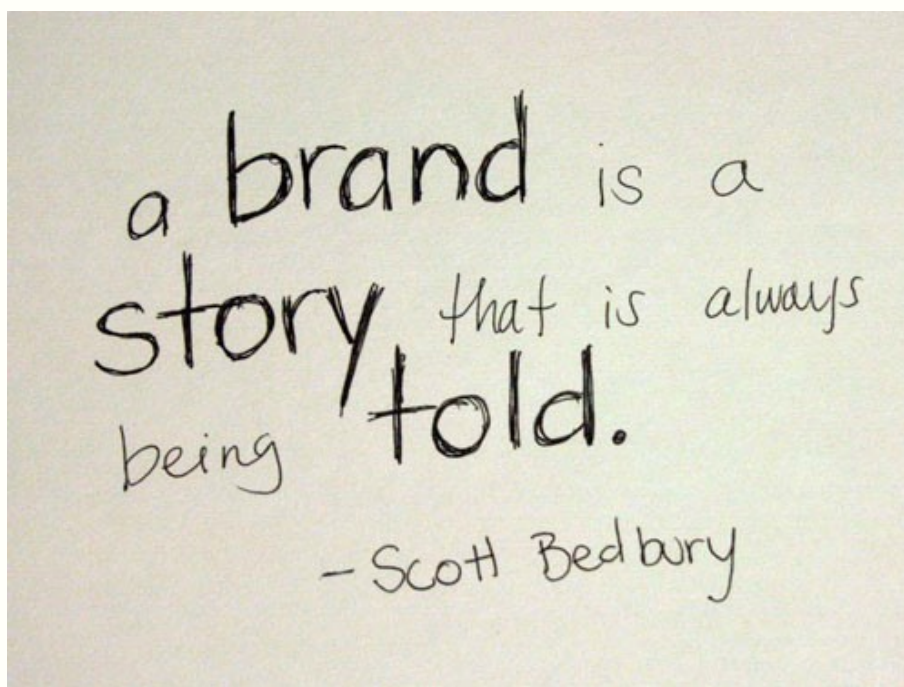
No one likes spam.

In their exuberance to get their name out there, many companies can go overboard. Be mindful of how often you post and the contents of your posts on social media. Also, be aware of how often you are sending emails out to clients. It is necessary to send something out daily? If you are posting daily, don't always make it about your company. Promote others. Spotlight a great employee or a leader in your industry. Promote other companies in your industry that support or work with you.



Prove Your Stamina

We've all seen those flash-in-the-pan companies. They may be innovative and exciting in their own right, but for one reason or another don't last. They may come out of the gate with much fanfare, celebrity endorsements, and even big first quarter sales, but still flop in the next five years. No one wants to be *that* company and no one wants to buy from them. What will you do with your warranties, your gift cards or the maintenance of your product from a company that has gone under? If you want to be relevant in your industry in 10-20 years and beyond you have to do more than be innovative and take risks. A snazzy marketing campaign won't be enough to save you. Look at the big picture. How can your market continue to relate to you as the fabric of society changes? You need to prove to your market that you are willing to go that extra mile and continue to evolve to meet their needs, long term. Addressing their concerns and building relationships based on common values will go a long way toward this goal.



Online Advertising

Now that we've covered what it takes to set up a successful presence that is suitable for advertising let's look at one of the biggest advertising venues available in today's market.

LinkedIn is a great resource because it is where industry professionals go to connect. However, be cautious of posting subject matter that relates too much to your company's products and services. The biggest complaint many people have about this platform is those "selling" posts. If you want to advertise on LinkedIn, be sure you go through the right channels. Your options are Self Service Advertising, Sponsored InMail, and Premium Display Advertising.

The most common option is the self-service advertising. Remember, if anything can be labeled, "most common" that means that many other companies are also doing the same thing. Make sure what you are throwing out there is attention grabbing in a way that is relevant to your product/service. With Self-service, you can create up to 15 versions of your own ad. The reason for this is, depending upon which segment of your market you are trying to reach, you may need a different approach. Some of the ways you can target your ads are by job title, industry, job function, location and LinkedIn group. Another advantage of the self-service is the ability to set a budget and timeline for the ad. The ad will run for as long as you want within the budget you set for it.

If you want something a little more hard hitting with results, try one of LinkedIn's premium advertising solutions. One is Sponsored InMail allows your company to target professionals related to your business with specific messages. This feature is basically email marketing within LinkedIn so you need to be careful that your message is in line with the values of those professionals. Don't "sell" to them, "partner" with them.

The other option is Premium Display Advertising. This advertising format allows your company to create a display ad that will reach your target audience and is great for creating brand awareness. Twitter is another available advertising platform. With Twitter, you have two options: Promoted Accounts and Promoted Tweets.



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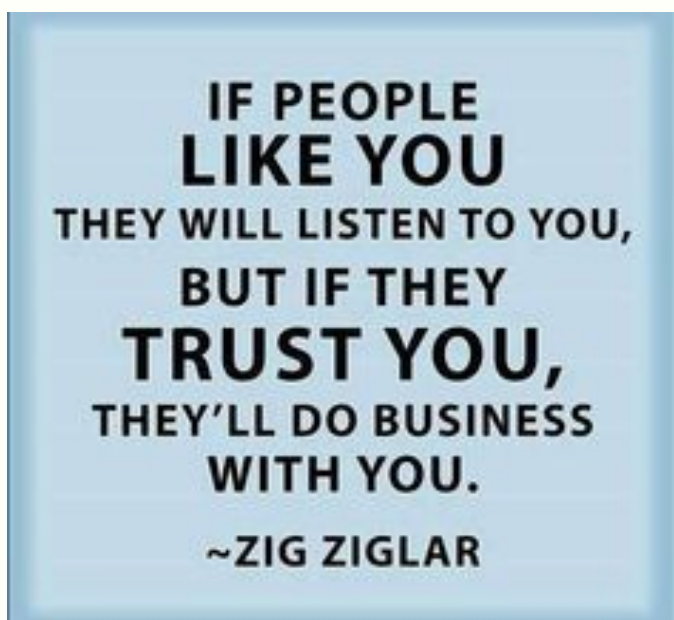


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Promoted Accounts: This option means that your company can use the resources of followers already obtained by your target market. So, if people within your market follow people or businesses that are relevant to yours, then your account will be “suggested” and promoted to them. These accounts are listed in the “Who to Follow” category. The advantage here is creating more brand awareness and focusing on people who are already interested in what you offer.

Promoted Tweets: This advertising option allows you to target audiences by keywords, interests, location and even the type of device they are using. These tweets show up in people’s time-lines and can be a great exposure for companies. If you craft these promoted tweets well, most people won’t even notice the “sponsored” sign placed in the corner of the tweet. If it looks like something they would see from their normal followers, then they will appreciate your company more and feel less like you’re an intrusion in their already busy timeline.

Facebook presents another avenue for advertising and has features similar to LinkedIn. Like LinkedIn, Facebook allows you to run several different versions of an ad, based upon the target you are aiming for. Also, like LinkedIn, it allows you to budget your ad and control how long it runs for. The length of time you set for it will dictate, how that budget is used, so understanding the schematics of how the system works is important. Facebook is also great at giving you feedback with data on how well your ad did. This is extremely important to pay attention to because you’ll want to see what effects your tweaks may have.



Search Engine Marketing

SEM marketing is what you see at the top of your search results whenever you search for something. The benefit of this very popular advertising option is that you are targeting a specific market. The people searching for a product or service related to what you have are already looking specifically for you. If your website has the right amount of businesses and the best SEO out there, you will easily pull up first in the search engines. However, if you are new to the industry or haven't developed your site enough to pull that rank (and believe me it's a very delicate process) then SEM marketing may be your best option. SEM, like many of the other advertising options, allow you to target your market based on keywords, topics, specific demographic information, location, device and interests.

If you want to get your website to the top of the search list through SEO, then you will need to look into optimizing your site. The best avenue for this will be adding links that will attract searches, improving your URL and taglines, and using key words in your website content. Beware, however, of companies or organizations that offer to (for a fee) get you to the top of the search without playing by the SEO rules. They may be able to deliver the quick results they claim, but they can also get you banned by the search engines. The reason SEO isn't easy and why many companies choose to pay for SEM is because the search engines monitor the process closely. You won't be able to loophole your way around the rules easily and if you get caught, you could damage your online reputation for a significant amount of time.

Costs

Of course, when it comes to advertising you have to budget accordingly and it can be overwhelming because even on a proven platform, you may not always be sure what will work and what won't. So, here are some costs to consider when it comes to the online ads just discussed.

If you are really concerned about budget and want to keep an eye on expenses, the most common method is using the CPC or cost-per-click method. Like many of the ad options we've mentioned on the various platforms, this allows you to control your budget and readjust your approach if something isn't working. CPC means that you only pay when money when your ad is clicked on.

CPM or cost per mille is a cost program that charges for every thousand times the ad is shown. If you are concerned about cost with CPM, some platforms will allow a fixed cost that allows you to set a budget for how long it runs or is shown.

