

5 Ways to "Spring Clean" Your Brand

If it's time to update your look, do so by keeping your company's original appeal.

By John Williams | May 12, 2008

When is the last time you took a hard look at all your branding materials (e.g., your marketing materials, packaging and website)? Do they match one another? Is the information up-to-date? Is the messaging consistent? Perhaps it's time for an evaluation--a "spring cleaning," so to speak.

Branding is about emotional impact. Everything that represents your brand visually should resonate with your customers, sending the same primary message and triggering the same emotions. If each piece looks different, brand confusion occurs. It's essential that your logo, website, marketing collateral, advertising and packaging work together, to inspire your customer to act. If it's time to clean up, coordinate and/or de-clutter your brand, here are a few pointers:

1. **Assess your brand promise.** Your brand is your promise to your customer. It tells them what they can expect from your products and services, and it differentiates your offering from your competitor's. Your brand is derived from who you are, who you want to be and who people perceive you to be. Your brand promise should be evaluated before anything else because it's the foundation for all your branding.

Is your brand promise resonating with consumers? In other words, does the customer experience equal their expectation? If you are the innovative maverick in your industry, then customers should see you that way. Keep in mind that you can't be all things to all people. Who you are should be based on what your target customers want you to be.

2. **Evaluate your visual image.** Review the visual aspects of your brand. Do the look and feel of your promotional materials accurately and effectively reflect your brand? It's difficult to sell a high-quality product with homemade-looking marketing materials. In the mind of consumers, quality materials equal quality product.

If you feel your design is ineffective or out-of-date, consider updating it by retaining key design elements that still work, while shedding those that don't. Since your logo is the foundation for all your visual branding, modify it first. Keep your name or alter it only slightly. The key is to make your brand look current without losing its original appeal, and thus customers. If you do make any changes, modify your written brand standards (i.e., brand manual) accordingly.

It's never a good idea to change the direction of your design just because you're "tired of it." Advertising wisdom says that about the time you're tired of your look, others are just noticing it. Frequency plays a huge role in memory recall, so your audience must be exposed to your brand image many, many times.

3. **Ensure consistency.** Are you using your logo, brand colors and graphic elements consistently throughout all your promotional materials? All of your materials should tie to one another graphically, creating a cohesive "family" when viewed side by side. They should convey the same look and feel, and image, and evoke a similar emotional response in your customer. Of course, your materials don't need to match each other exactly, but some elements should remain consistent from one piece to the next, including:

- **Predominant color(s)**
- **Graphic elements**
- **Font(s)**
- **Logo usage**

4. **Update content.** Ensure all pricing, ordering information, product lists and product specs are up-to-date. Delete anything no longer relevant or accurate. If you're advertising on the internet, make sure there are no elapsed limited-time offers being advertised. This is especially important when using affiliate advertising. Often affiliates will use old ads and/or links to offers no longer valid. This not only confuses and aggravates consumers, but also reflects negatively on your brand.

Remember, it's not just what you say; it's how you say it. Are you clear, concise and compelling? These are the 3 "C"s of good content.

5. **Review strategies.** What are your branding and/or marketing strategies? How and where are you getting your message out? What is and isn't working for you? Perhaps it's time to try something new.

Awareness and recognition are keys to growing your business. Maintaining a family of branding materials that tie together in design and messaging helps build brand loyalty. A little "spring cleaning" may be just what you need to brighten your company's outlook.