



Strong Brands Can Do Big Things for a Small Business

Does your company have a strong brand? A brand and an online presence are not the same thing. Sure, being online can provide articles or other items about you or your firm to show up in an Internet search – if people know you by name or your company name. But, that doesn't mean that a company brand is present in that mix of blog posts, web sites and social media pages that turn up in a Google or Bing search. Everything that is out there for prospects to find related to you and your business may not be saying anything important or relevant about you, your firm or your products and services.

Just being active online, offering content through a blog or social media platforms isn't enough. Just because you are out there doesn't mean you are sending *the* perfect message that will make prospects immediately aware that you are *the one* person or company, without a doubt, they need.



Without a clear brand to tie it all together, unfocused, mixed messages are likely going right by great prospects who might be members of your ideal target audience. (You do know who your ideal target audiences are, don't you?)

Your brand needs to clearly define the essence of what you and your firm stand for. Being mysterious is no way to attract clients. If prospects are ideal for you and you for them, they need to immediately know it, without a doubt. That's the importance of your brand, whether it is a company brand or a personal brand.

Your small company's strong brand needs to be developed early on. It is the basis of identifying who you are, what you do and what value you bring to customers. This critical piece must be clear before starting to develop a marketing plan, marketing materials or undertaking any type of marketing initiative. Before developing your company web site, creating blog posts or signing on to Facebook, LinkedIn or Pinterest as pieces of your marketing strategy, your brand comes first.

Your brand serves as the key filter, or prism, through which every piece of your marketing plan and your marketing materials must pass. The brand becomes your focus for presenting that clear, concise message over and over again. It is the basis of any marketing message that tells prospects that you, your company and products are a perfect fit for certain customer types.

A strong brand must tell prospects precisely who you, or your company, are and exactly what it is you do to provide value. Another way of describing that last part is: why someone should do business with you. We operate in a WIIFM world. Everyone wants to know: What's in It For Me?

A strong brand presents your story in a clear, unmistakable manner that makes you stand out from others who provide similar products and services.

Yes, even a solo-preneur can gain an advantage over competitors by using his or her strong personal brand as a prism through which all marketing efforts are viewed and created. Your brand is your differentiator. It is what makes you different from everyone else offering the same products or services. It represents the essence of what you and your firm stand for; how you do business and why customers should use you and not anyone else. It sets you apart as being different – and superior – to others. If you are the perfect fit for a certain group of consumers, they will likely pay more to get you working for them. People pay more to get that perfect fit.

A strong brand, when used correctly, can do a number of positive things to move you and your firm to a higher, more recognizable level.

1. **Establish you as someone uniquely able to resolve their unique challenges** – your personal characteristics and traits show that you have had similar experiences or background, and can better understand the customer's needs.
2. **Establish you as an expert or specialist, able to charge a premium for your products and services** – it's common knowledge that doctors practicing general medicine do not command fees as high as specialists. The same can apply to whatever business sector you operate in.
3. **Establish a high level of trust between you and potential customers** – they feel they really know you and share your values. As your brand is based on you, and all marketing is based on that brand, customers will recognize that bond in all of your marketing efforts – brochures, websites, blogs, social media activities and more.
4. **Improve transparency about you and your company**- When your brand is totally based on you (or your company), your talents, traits and experiences, it will create the trust that customers need. The more your marketing is based on you and your brand, the more your marketing tools will improve your credibility.
5. **Make it Easy for Customers to do Business with you** – We all find it easier, and more pleasant, to deal with someone similar to us. We are more comfortable with those we know, like, trust, and can communicate with better, resulting in a more positive business experience.

If your content marketing and online presence aren't providing the results you had hoped for, it could be that a strong brand message is just not there. Without that strong, clear brand, prospects may well not really understand what it is you do and what value you might bring to help them solve their problem. Not sure how to develop your brand? We can help. Just get in touch today and we can get you started.

Maurer Consulting Group is a strategies firm helping small business clients evaluate and formulate strategies for success. For a conversation with Terri L Maurer about your firm and how we can get you focused on growth and success, call [330.666.0802](tel:330.666.0802) or send an email to Terri at: tlmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com