

## Building Brand Awareness Through Tradeshows

by Susan Friedmann

Branding is a basic marketing concept that is designed to set your products/services apart from the competition. By using a particular name, phrase, design, symbol or a combination of these, you can create a unique identity. When choosing a brand name, consider the following five criteria:

1. It should suggest product/service benefits.
2. It should be simple, memorable, & unique.
3. It should fit the image of the company.
4. It should have positive connotations for the target market.
5. It should be easy to pronounce and to pictorialize.

Branding is not a sales and marketing gimmick. Instead it refines and defines corporate culture and identity. A brand must have meaning to its consumers, its organization and its employees. Brand is an emotional link between you and your customer. It is what people buy when they buy your product or your company. The most important part of a brand's identity is the promise it makes to customers. The essence of branding is simplicity and timelessness.

### Integrating Brand Awareness Into Your Exhibit Program

Since exhibiting is a powerful extension of your company's advertising, promotion, public relations and sales function, that automatically means it is an excellent way to enhance brand awareness. Everything your company stands for, no matter how large or small, is being exhibited on the show floor. This means there needs to be total consistency, congruity, clarity and focus in every aspect of your exhibiting program, before, during and after the show.

Here are three important points to consider as you plan to integrate brand awareness into your tradeshow program.

1. Consistency and repetition is vital in creating brand awareness. People buy brands they know and they trust! A brand is a promise that companies make to their customers. Strong branding requires all the levels of communication to agree with one another.
2. Ensure all your marketing and promotions are consistent and that they have your logo, colors, typeface, slogans and characters. Everything you develop should have the same look and feel.
3. Peoples' perception about your company, products, and services is a major factor in their choice of brand preferences and their buying behavior. All perception is subjective and based on experience. Individuals tend to interpret information according to existing

beliefs, attitudes, needs and mood.

The following is a 10-point checklist to act as a reminder for many of the questions you need to ask and answer as you plan brand integration into your exhibit program:

1. What needs to be done to ensure that your booth conveys total consistency, congruity, clarity and focus of your company image and brand?

Consider:

- booth size
- location
- graphics
- demonstrations
- staff
- handouts and giveaways
- lead management

2. How can your graphics work best for you?

- can be easily seen and read in three seconds
- use a simple and bold typeface
- have striking and grabbing visuals
- are instantly memorable
- use a unique size or shape
- reinforce your message
- make your message a single, strong, provocative idea
- use a "What's in it for me?" message
- use bold colors

3. What are the best promotional activities you can use to enhance brand awareness?

*Personal invitations!*  
(e.g. with incentive and response form)

*Direct mail with incentive*

*Pre-show advertising*

- trade and/or local publications
- local media
- websites (e.g. company, show, association)
- broadcast faxes
- association newsletters
- city billboards
- transit advertising

*At-show advertising*

- show catalogs
- show dailies
- airport billboards, banners/electronic message boards
- hotel closed-circuit television
- hotel - on door or in room promotion
- kiosks/banners at show site
- convention television channels

4. What types of PR communications could be used?

Pre-show:

- press releases for local and trade \ publications
- product/service application articles
- personal invitations to trade/local editors
- company newsletters

*At-show:*

- press kits for the press office
- press reception
- video/slide presentation at the booth
- reprints of articles as giveaways
- seminars/workshops
- contests
- personalities/spokesperson at booth

5. What sponsorship opportunities exist and would complement your company image?

Some of the most frequent sponsorship opportunities are:

- press room
- international lounge
- speaker or VIP room
- awards reception
- educational programs
- keynote sessions
- coffee breaks
- luncheons/dinners
- banners
- badge holders
- audio visual equipment
- display computers
- tote bags
- shuttle buses

6. What advertising premiums will be consistent with your image and complement the message you want to convey?

Consider:

- budget
- originality
- usefulness and appropriateness for your target audience
- distribution

7. Who are the best ambassadors for your company - the right people to staff the booth?

8. What training should they receive?

Consider:

- prospect qualification
- booth etiquette
- product knowledge
- product demonstration
- obtaining commitment

9. What is the best dress code to convey your company image?

10. What is the best way to follow-up after the show that is consistent with your exhibiting program?

Remember that branding is a process,

## At a Glance . . .

- Your booth should convey total consistency, congruity, clarity and the focus of your company image and brand.
- Make sure your graphics are working for you!
- Best promotional activities you can use to enhance brand awareness
- Take advantage of sponsorship opportunities
- Choose advertising premiums that will be consistent with your image and complement the message you want to convey.
- Select the right people to staff the booth.
- Dress for Success! Be sure your dress code conveys your company image.

a business system, that fuels and sustains all customer/company relationships! Total consistency, congruity, clarity and focus in every aspect of your exhibiting program, before, during and after the show are essential.

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