



## Branding Building Your Pipeline

With the housing market on the rise again and social media gaining an even greater presence in the business world, knowing just who you're targeting and how to reach them effectively has become increasingly important. Currently, two of the largest generations in history are in the housing market at the same time and they both have their separate wants, needs, goals and desires. These generations are the baby boomers and Generation Y.

### **Three Generations**

The baby boomers also known as the "Golden Generation" is considered to be the 76 million people who were born between 1946 and 1964.

Generation X is the 41 million people who were born between the early 1960s through the early 1980s.

Generation Y makes up 80 million people born between 1979 and 1994. This group are more socially liberal and are constant communicators who are connected 24/7.

Today, you need to have an online presence and be able to respond to a potential seller/buyer/customer quickly. You must know how to "text" and all the symbols that is used.

Consumers today expect you to already know about them, and they want to be engaged in a conversation with you, not just being hassled to be sold your services or your products you offer. You must establish your expertise with them through credibility and transparency and customize your presentation to prove you know what they want and what they need. And provide instant information at the click of a mouse.

## In One Day on the Internet - March 2012

- Enough information is consumed to fill 168 million DVDs
- 294 billion emails are sent
- 2 million blog posts are written (enough posts to fill TIME magazine for 770 million years)
- 172 million people visit Facebook
- 40 million visit Twitter
- 22 million visit LinkedIn
- 20 million visit Google+
- 17 million visit Pinterest
- 4.7 billion minutes are spent on Facebook
- 532 million statuses are updated
- 250 million photos are uploaded
- 22 million hours of TV and movies are watched on Netflix
- 864,000 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube
- More than 35 million apps are downloaded
- More iPhones are sold than people are born

### The Rules of Social Media

To communicate effectively in the social media world means understanding the new rules of the road. Today people want to have a say, have meaningful dialogs, to be engaged and involved in the process, personal interactions with others, to be listened to, to help shape what they find useful, to connect with others in similar activities, just plain talk, they want their communication to be genuine and relevant, to conduct business with ethical companies who work transparently and to be in partnership.



### Question?

- What Drives Your Homeownership Sales?
- Is your marketing driving your sales or, do you have alliances and programs established and working at the wheel?

Challenges in the housing market have underscored the need to have the truthful knowledge, resources and latest program revisions in our hands puts a sharp focus on the important role of sustaining, preserving and protection homeownership. Keep in mind, everything you as a company (service provider) post online automatically becomes part of your brand and your brand should not just be limited to one service or product.

## A Letter from the Consumer

Dear Marketers:

I'm much smarter than your marketing gives me credit for. I don't like to be sold...I don't care about your advertising, your free samples, your promotions, your special offers. I don't like to be told what's cool, new, improved, last-longer, smells better, tastes better, or is less filling...I don't care about your brand, it doesn't matter to me. I avoid your interruptions to my busy day whenever and wherever I can...I don't have time to pay attention to your sales pitch...You are white noise to me and I have tuned you out. If you want to be a part of my life, here's what you'll need to do:

- Be honest with me
- Keep you promises
- Treat me with respect
- Provide me with more use value than you take from me in cash value
- Teach me better ways to grow and expand my life experience
- Help make my day-to-day, lighter, more relaxed and enjoyable
- Help me to experience greater connection to what's important to me

Do these things for me and you will win my trust and devotion. Then I will gladly welcome you into my life, and share the value of our relationship with others who are important to me.

Sincerely,

A. Consumer

## Branding

There are many different definitions of a brand, the most effective description however, is that a brand is a name, symbol or design that is commonly known to identify a company or its products and separate them from the competition. However, too many businesses ignore the possibilities that branding can offer. The main benefit of branding is that prospective buyers and sellers are much more likely to remember your business. Therefore it makes sense to understand that branding is not about getting your target market to choose you over the competition, but it is about getting your prospects to see you as the only one that provides a solution to their problem.

The only real form of exposure that you can have no control over is time. Even the best branding will not be remembered by everyone the first time they see it. Over months and years, a brand becomes more effective and will be more easily recalled.

Just because your branding might appear unsuccessful after two months, does not mean that it is not working at all. Most of the world's best-known brands have been established for over 50 years!

Branding results is developing your reputation as "the go-to" place or person that consistently delivers excellence to new and repeat customers. We're seeing more of an emphasis on brands building emotional relationships with consumers because it's powerful and it works.

When you do it, you have a much stronger affinity, a much stronger business, much stronger growth and much stronger results. Building your brand today comes about on the experiences your customers have with your company based on their own perceptions and the trust a consumer has in you.

## **Branding YOU...is not about you!**

Branding is all about the consumer; their goals, needs, and desires. Take time to learn what the consumer needs are today. You must become the counselor, advisor, and a resource for trusted information. There is still a lot of fear and uncertainty in the marketplace. It is crucial that every consumer has the best information on which to base their buy or sell decision. Consumers do not want to be sold anything today, they want to be educated. Strive to exceed the consumer's expectation in services, available products and technology. Consumers have already done their homework before contacting you.

- **Dedicate service to a niche market** – Identify and prospect, i.e. short sales, REOs, rental, new construction
- **Be the expert** – Know everything about your niche market. Study! Obtain certifications, designations. **Values and gifts** – Give the consumer quick access to the most up-to-date data, trusted resources and various complimenting products. You must keep ahead of the curve of new products.
- **Be unique** – Community focused.
- **Join your niche market arena** – Become active in industry associations, network in person
- **Design your webpage** – All about your niche market (not about YOU), post listings with virtual tours and videos.
- **Technology** – Communicate with them as they wish in terms of mobile applications (texting), social media and blogging. Use Quick Response (QR) codes.
- **Stay positive!**

## **Changes in Marketing**

Marketing is no longer about creating demand measured in sales, but building relationships measured in trust. The more important and transcendent ROI (Rate of return) we need to be measuring is the quality of lasting relationships rather than the quantity of closed transactions. At best, today's consumers ignore marketing, worse they loathe it. This should be no big surprise to anyone charged with building the value of a brand. Consumers are inundated with over 3,000 marketing messages a day.

Despite this, agents keep churning out advertising nobody cares about. But the real problem isn't that people dislike advertising, or that tons of money is wasted on marketing that is poorly targeted, ineffective, and just plain annoying. The real issue is consumers have changed!

Consumers now have the power to determine and control what they allow into their heads. Technology has finally shifted the power from the marketer to the consumer. Now consumers have the tools to opt-out and bar any further interruptions from marketers. There's no going back to the old ways of doing things. Consumers now enjoy the ability to consume only the content they want and enjoy (sans the embedded marketing messages) and frequently use these same new tools to boycott or disparage any brand they find lacking in their trust or interest.

In terms of the housing market, Generation Y members are buying homes at an earlier age than Generation X did. Generation Y wants to be close to their friends, family, jobs and social centers. They expect the same amenities they had in college such as a gym, walking trails, pool, etc. As far as amenities go, the Golden Generation expects state-of-the-art kitchens, large walk-in closets, whirlpool bathtubs, fireplaces and swimming pools. The same amenities are the top expectations are for Generation X. However Generation Y wants a games or billiards room, because they are all about the social aspect.

## Real Estate Professionals Must Change Their Focus to Connection and Identity

**Connect** - To join, unite; to establish communication between; to cause to be associated, as in a personal or business relationship.

**Identity Branding** - the brand reflects the personality of the owner (you). An 'identity brand' is in many ways synonymous with your reputation. It refers to the way other people see you. Are you a genius? An expert? Are you trustworthy? What do you represent? What do you stand for? What ideas and notions pop up as soon as someone hears your name?

At the risk of overly simplifying, let's use the word "**identity**" in place of branding. I think it's a far better word with more relevant meaning. Organizations, products and services all have an identity. It's through your identity that you build a relationship in the minds of customers by defining who and what your value proposition represents.

But this is only half the equation - the more purposeful component to identity building is the ability to influence customer behavior to purchase or use your service. Endless logos and ad making will not get you there.

The relationships people want are connections with other people not with brands. For brands to get close, they must facilitate people relationships, not deepen brand relationships. Today, the focus of value, consumer engagement must be established and maintained in a different way.

Three things in particular must be central to brand marketing in an era powered by connection, relationship and bonding.

### A New Era Begins – Factors that will Drive Change

- Name - The relationships people want are connections with other people not with brands
- B2B- Business to Business – Local community connection
- "B" Behavior – The more purposeful component to identity building is the ability to influence customer behavior to engage your services

Certainly, people will continue to adopt brands, just as they always have. We must convert to a "brand-driven" enterprise in today's new economy. Brand-driven companies know intuitively it is first an internal activity that comes from the heart of the enterprise straight to the heart of the customer. Brand design in the new economy is more about **meaning** than marketing.

Sometimes the strategic direction is clear, other times it's far from apparent even to those at the top of the organization. In the mad rush to manage change, to create powerful brands and brand images, companies spend tons of money reinventing themselves with ambitious marketing and advertising plans long before taking the most important first step -- knowing exactly what it is they are seeking to build upon -- **their brand's foundation.**

## Brand by Engagement and Collaboration

**Engagement** - To attract and hold the attention of; engross, to win over or attract; to draw into; involve

Today's consumer can be difficult to engage and connect. Overwhelmed with more information than ever before, consumers must be approached in a variety of new ways. Reaching consumers in today's world takes a whole new mindset, a new set of tools and compliance with rules. Social media is not really new anymore, but many people still struggle with the subtle things that might help or hurt success within the top social communities. Emails and corporate websites are fast being replaced by Facebook and Twitter, where customers and service providers alike have been liberated from the control of marketing and customer-service reps.

While many companies embrace the opportunities in these new two-way communications tools, social media brings a host of new problems, such as how to measure communications, keep on message and in legal compliance. Established rules of communicating with customers are unraveling, driven by a shift in how we use the Internet.

### Social Media

- Listen and measure - Measuring the social conversation is step one for any brand. When you engage in social media, you have to listen and understand the nature of the conversation, the volume and the topics being discussed.
- Connect with Skype
- Add a "Click Here to Connect Now" to your website
- Never give out personal information
- Always be reminded that the people you meet online may not be who they say they are

**Collaboration** - Harnessing the power to engage people, solve problems, and manage change in business.



### Question

- How do we make a difference to our customer?
- What is most important to us right now that serve our customers?

Success comes from acting on a trend when it's identified – not waiting for market highs and lows. These are several components that will have direct consequences to the success, or failure, of this year's branding, engagement, and marketing efforts.

### Pivot

First, what does it mean to pivot? To pivot is simply to switch from the original vision of the business to something different. The key is that the new focus is somehow related. According to Forbes.com and YoungEntrepreneur.com columnist Martin Zwilling, the term pivot "is properly used to describe smart startups that change direction quickly, but stay grounded in what they've learned. They keep one foot in the past and place one foot in a new possible future." Pivoting is a strategy that's not only viable and valuable but also, for many, a natural extension of what they've already been doing.

It's tough to let go of your own carefully crafted vision of the future. But visions are not realities, no matter how well you strategized, researched and funded it. The smart entrepreneur (that's you, right?) will be able to keep a loose grip on that vision and remain flexible.

That way, even if your idea isn't panning out, you'll be open to other elements that are. And then you pivot. You're not losing the vision; you're adjusting it. That's the point of the pivot. It allows you to gain from what you've already done but not stay stuck in it.

## **Branding You**

Leads are great, referrals are the BEST. For making the brand more known among people, one needs to build the reputation in the market. And for building the reputation one needs to interact with people and to solve their problems and maximum try to fulfill their requirements.

These days, branding your company isn't enough. The world wants to hear what you have to say, if you aren't building your own brand, your company will suffer. If you want your company to succeed, become an expert in your field, claim a website under your own domain name, connect with the media, and build relationships with your audience. All these will establish the basis for a referral-based business. It is best to not sound so much like a salesman, but more like an expert in your field who is offering their honest advice on something.

## **Get Personal**

- Develop the local “go-to” resource
- Offer simple solutions and great service
- Become an expert on something that relates to your business
- Establish a website or blog under your name
- Twitter and Facebook are good for building any brand
- LinkedIn – great for business to business connection (B2B)
- Connect with other business – network in person

An emotionally satisfying customer experience can be powerful, especially these days when service expectations are so low.

Nothing is more valuable to your business than a great impression that lasts beyond a single transaction. Remember that today's exceptional service means customer loyalty and repeat business over time and better yet, great word-of-mouth for your services.

The key, of course, is being able to deliver what you say you'll deliver, when you say you'll deliver it, whether it's your product, service or some kind of positive result.

It also helps to start thinking in terms of the type of value you can deliver in exchange for the prices you charge.

- Could it be value up-front or added value on the back-end?
- Could it be value based strictly on service, delivery or another factor, such as innovation (online bidding), design, packaging, a unique location or a provider of other services and products?
- Can you leverage that value five or 10 times (either actual or perceived value) compared to what your fees are?

Simply put, you can have a great logo, signs, business cards and website, but until you have a customer, you don't have a business.

### **Ten Key Ingredients of Lasting Brands**

- Define your business voice and message - personality
- Know your target audience
- Focus on the customer – attentive service
- Actively manage the people who represent your brand
- Separate the personal from the professional, i.e. Facebook business page
- Combine social media with e-mail marketing
- Live up to your promise
- Conduct a “review, survey”
- 24/7 instant access to information – make it easy to maneuver around your website
- Customer service is friendly and consistent

Reinforcing your brand in all your communications helps customers understand the benefits of what you offer and what's better about your business. Make sure all the cooks in your kitchen represent your brand consistently across all media so your business can grow. Your satisfied customers will come back for seconds.

### **Lasting Brands**

Your brand is what differentiates your business from the competition. Your brand is what you do and how you do it -- and how you communicate that to the world. To use a cooking metaphor, too many cooks adding random ingredients to your brand can make for one crazy dish.

Make sure the brand you've built your reputation on stays strong as you expand your marketing outreach into new channels. Follow this five-step recipe for consistent branding across all media.

- Use the same images, logos and writing style across all communication channels. Brand recognition is often thought of as the way you portray your business or organization visually, but it's more than that. Your brand is the way you look and sound to others, so make sure you're using similar elements across your communication channels. That means consistent graphic design.
- Make sure your business logo and company colors, typefaces and imagery appear in your e-mail campaigns, on social media sites and across the internet as well as in print materials. Use your logo or your photo as an avatar instead of the Twitter bird or some other generic icon. That way readers will know whoever is posting is really you.
- Define your business voice and message. Is it upbeat and witty? Serious and trustworthy? Reassuring and dependable? Speak to the issues and challenges of your audience using language and a tone that will resonate with them.
- Define your brand message and persona. What does your brand represent to customers? What topics and keywords does your business focus on? What do you want prospects to think about when they come in contact with you, your products and services? Make sure you focus your social media and e-mail marketing content to match your desired brand message and persona. Many marketers make the mistake of trying to sound "hip" on Twitter or Facebook; your business voice and message don't change just because the medium changes.



- Actively manage the people who represent your brand. Make sure employees, marketing and agency staff, and anyone else who communicates with customers convey your brand message and represent your values. This is particularly important with social media, especially if you have other staff members posting on your company's behalf.
- Conduct a taste test. Does your business live up to your brand promise?
- Monitor social media websites and blogs, as well as customer review websites (such as Yelp), for positive and negative comments about your business. Search for your business name plus the word "reviews" to see what's being said about you, your industry and your competitors. Set up monitoring tools to make sure you don't miss relevant content and commentary. That gives you real-time intelligence on your brand's successes and shortcomings so you can fine-tune your recipe.

Responsibility to your clients doesn't end as soon as you make the sale. You need to keep them engaged. Make sure your sellers and buyers, partnerships and alliances are connected with you in all of your various social media outlets and update these outlets with information relevant to them. Provide them with ongoing activities, special events, new local businesses and community information. You will need to maintain your relationships with them moving forward in your business model. Generation X and Y are going to be your biggest advocates for potential new sellers and homebuyers. An online presence today is critical as the "go-to expert" because all of today's generations are online. So...get going in developing your online marketing strategy today! Pivot, stay engaged and get personal!

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