

Building Your Brand

More Than Just Creating a Logo

In the July/August 2011 issue, we reviewed the value of developing a brand for your company, built on the “promise of an experience.” Oftentimes, people assume that a brand is just a logo used on marketing materials. A brand goes far beyond having a logo.

Your brand is reflected in every way that you conduct business, from how you greet your customers, to what you say in your advertising — all conveying the promise of an experience.

Once you're clear on the message you want to convey to your cus-

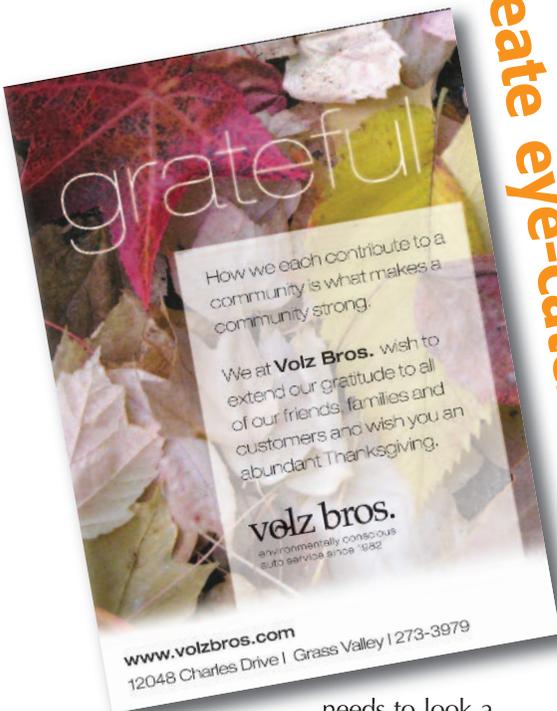
tomers (you are experts in import repair, you offer top-quality service at a reasonable price, etc.), now you are ready to develop your brand.

1. Develop a logo. This isn't a project for the weary. Don't try to develop a logo yourself, or hire your 16-year-old to do it. For the same reason that you wouldn't bring your car in for a tuneup at the local grocery store, hire a professional graphic designer.

A good designer (make sure to see work samples) has experience that assures that the logo represents your company, is clean, easy to read and attracts the customers' eye.

A good logo should look current and up-to-date, but not trendy, and should last for seven-10 years before requiring an update. If you already have a logo that customers have recognized you by for years, yet it





Create eye-catching ads.

more cost-effective than hiring an ad agency, so get competitive bids. The team comes up with the “concept” or unique idea for the ad, they are written by a professional copywriter who knows how to “sell” your product, and are designed by a graphic designer who will make sure that your ad “stands apart” from the crowd.

Don’t waste advertising dollars on a shotgun approach. Develop a theme, deliver the message, be consistent and track your results.

3. Invest in a website.

Not having a website is like not having a telephone. It’s an essential part of doing business, no matter what type of business you have. Fewer people are now searching for a business in the yellow pages, and will search on the internet first. Make sure that your website can be found.

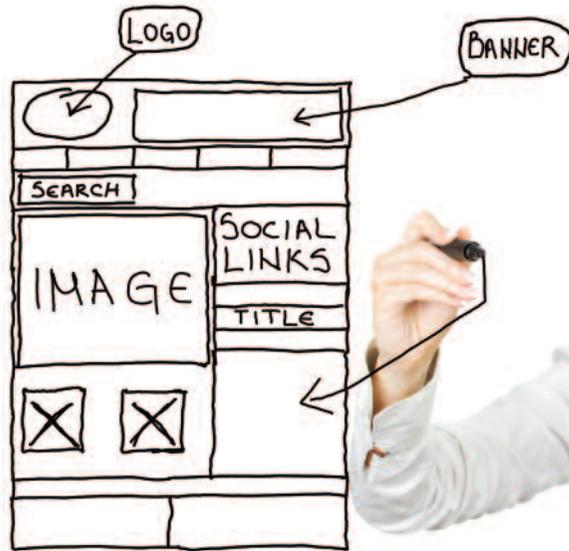
A website is developed in a similar manner as an ad campaign, as it’s

needs to look a bit more current, a good designer will be adept at revising your logo so you won’t have to start from scratch.

2. Create eye-catching ads.

Now that you have a strong logo, develop a series of ads that deliver your message in a unique way. (Again, hiring your cousin who was an English major is the wrong direction.) Impactful ads need to be developed by a professional, creative team.

A good graphic design firm can be



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created by a strategic team of writers, designers and programmers. Make sure to shop around and see examples of websites that the firm has produced before you hire someone. Prices can vary dramatically. Make your website easy to read, make the design and message consistent with your other marketing materials, and continue building your brand.

4. Try Social Media. Whether you believe in it or not, social media (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) has made a huge impact in today's world of advertising. (Facebook officially hit the half-billion member mark last year, with some 640 million users worldwide.)

Social media is one of the most cost-

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effective forms of advertising, with the most potential for reaching a huge audience, because it is viral (the spreading of information and opinions about a product or service from person-to-person).

Want to target women in your car care campaign? Want to provide tips on winter maintenance, and get a following to boot? These are all perfect campaigns to develop on your Facebook page (make sure to set up a business page, not a personal page, so



with a name and contact information, and the editors will always look forward to giving you coverage.

Don't know how to get started? Hire a professional!

6. Build community.

Word of mouth is the best form of advertising, and when the word is good news, it spreads like wildfire. Get involved in your local community, and donate services as often as you can. You will be pleasantly surprised by the amount that goodwill brings back to your business.

Better yet, create a campaign of giving, where you team up with your customers to donate to local charities. It's a win-win situation.

Submit news releases.

that you can take advantage of advertising on Facebook as well).

5. Submit news releases. Local newspapers love to get stories from businesses in their community. The key is to create the "story." Has a staff member just been credentialed? In what area and *how* will it benefit the customer? Are there other people who have this credential, or is it unique?

Submitting a news release on a monthly basis is a good practice to gain free advertising for your shop. Always include a "who, what, when and where" in your release, along

When it comes to advertising and building your brand, don't be penny-wise and pound-foolish. Put your dollars into creating a marketing plan that's well thought out, and you'll see a return that will get you more mileage than a good car. **SO**



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