



TIPS

5 Tips for Building a Stronger Brand

Grow your brand's impact, drive customer preference and build enduring relationships. These five tips can help your brand grow stronger, resonate with your customers, drive preference and develop enduring relationships.

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In an age of information-overload, getting through to customers has never been more difficult or more important. But making sure your brand has impact may not be as hard as it first appears. An important step in building your brand is making sure it's authentic. We have identified five things to focus on that can help your brand grow stronger, resonate with your customers, drive preference and develop enduring relationships.

1. People First

Setting up an organized system for keeping track of your earnings, expenses, receipts and other important information can really help save time. Getting organized will help you with this year's tax preparations, but the real benefits become clear over time—the sooner you start the sooner you see the benefits of being organized.

We've all experienced the maddening situation of wanting or needing to get something simple done but being told it is impossible because "we have a policy". Rules are an important part of a functioning organization, but when the rules become more important than the people they were designed to serve, you've lost something precious: humanity.

Every interaction between your brand and your customers either builds trust or erodes it. By making sure that everyone in your business has internalized this principle of "people first" you go a long way toward ensuring that your interactions with customers are building your brand, not undermining it.

2. You Do You

It is tempting for small companies to make the mistake of trying to sound bigger than they are. This results in all kinds of unfortunate choices, like using language that is needlessly officious or self-important. Be who you are. Be who you are because it is your biggest advantage—after all, no one can be you better than you. This is as true for a brand as it is for an individual. Customers are quick to find out when your words and actions don't line up with who you are or what you do, and that undermines your brand. When what you say and how you say it matches who you are and what you do, you have built a strong brand. That makes it easier for customers to trust you and to see what makes your business special.

To help you understand your brand better, be sure to take a look at our [Brand Planning Worksheet](#).

3. Destinations, Not Planes

Building a strong, authentic brand is all about meeting your customers where they are.

It is hard work to figure out what your story is and the best way of telling it. But this hard work is worth it. Telling your story well begins with understanding who you are, what makes you different and most importantly, what your customers want. Put yourself in the shoes of a prospective customer and ask yourself, "what do I want and need from this interaction?" Then tie the strengths of your business to meeting those wants and needs. A long list of your capabilities might make you feel good, but your customers don't really care. They want to know if you can help them. Here's an example:

If you were an airline, your investors would want to know how many planes you have, how many routes you fly and how many customers you serve. But your customers only want to know one thing: do you fly from where I am to where I want to go? Customers don't care how many planes you have; they care about getting to their destination. Don't talk about your planes, talk about their destinations.

4. Alignment

Businesses of all sizes make the mistake of worrying about production values more than the story they are telling. Production values, the choices that go into where and how your brand is presented, are very important. But a great looking ad, sign, logo, or brochure won't help your business if the story you are telling doesn't ring true.

Take a look at our blog post about [branding tips](#) to help you align your messaging with your brand. Once you have your story straight, then you can worry about production values!

Be sure that your production choices match your brand. If you are a rural farmer selling farm-fresh organic eggs, a 32-page high-gloss brochure may look great, but it doesn't feel right. The production and the story you are telling need to support each other to support your brand. Remember, every touch-point either builds or diminishes your brand. Make sure what you are saying and how you are saying it work together to create the same impression.

5. Connect

Thanks to social media, consumers now have a voice that gives them some influence and levels the playing field a little in what has historically been a one-sided conversation dominated by the manufacturers of products and services. Some forward-thinking companies are using social media to respond to the growing demand for authenticity by proactively connecting with their audience and engaging in open, transparent dialog with them. For example, a product manager can now listen to her customers' conversations and join in to offer help, resolve issues, express gratitude, convey regret, celebrate accomplishments—all very human,

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non-corporate interactions that we have grown to not expect from the companies with which we do business.

Bringing these five points into your business can have a transformative impact on your brand, your processes, and your brand's impact on your customers. We want to help you build your brand and grow your business, because helping people communicate, share ideas, and work smarter and better is what Hammermill is all about.

Take a look at some of our other Brand and Business ideas at hammermill.com/for-work/