

Beyond Branding

Branding key to survival

● If done right, it is an effective form of advertising

In a highly competitive business environment, developing a credible brand and corporate identity that is instantly recognisable is important for smaller businesses and for large enterprises.

Deon Kruger, the managing director of MGM Brand Construction and Advertising, a SA branding and advertising company, says that although larger corporations typically spend vast amounts of money and time developing their brands, more small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are realising that developing a brand is essential for their survival.

"A business cannot thrive in a competitive environment if they don't have a recognisable brand. In SA's growing economy, smaller businesses can, and do, find themselves up against large corporations bidding for the same big contracts.

To get a client's attention, they need a brand that will make them stand out," Kruger says.

Even professional trades such as law firms, doctors and architects are recognising the importance of presenting themselves to customers in a more acceptable manner.

He says offices and waiting areas, for instance, have been jazzed-up. This indicates professionalism and offers the

customer a reflection of who they are dealing with and the type of service they can expect.

"Branding creates a 'face' for a business. It also gives a company credibility and provides the consumer with a sense of professionalism. If branding is done correctly from the start, it is one of the most effective means of advertising for a new or small business. It is probably the one thing that will make potential customers remember or recognise the business if they haven't dealt with it before," Kruger says.

Developing an appropriate corporate identity is a good start for SMEs.

A corporate identity includes the basics such as a logo that reflects the company's business, as well as stationery and signage to compliment the logo. Ideally, all external branding which doubles as advertising, should share a common theme and support the corporate identity.

Visible and well-designed signs, internally and externally, goes a long way to support a company's marketing efforts.

Companies embarking on a branding exercise should enlist the services of a branding agency, giving them access to a team of specialists who have the necessary levels of expertise, experience and creativity.

Kruger admits that choosing a



Deon Kruger.

branding agency as a partner for the journey is not easy, particularly for companies that have little or no exposure to the world of branding and advertising.

When selecting a branding agency, Kruger advises companies to ask for the agency's credentials, examples of their work and other corporate branding they created. "It is important to check that the people who will work on the account have the right credentials, experience and attitude. Pay attention to

whether they are listening to you, if they understand the critical relationship between branding, and how it can influence your business. Ultimately you should feel comfortable with the agency you employ," he advises.

So what can a company expect once they select an agency?

Kruger says a client service consultant from an agency is usually appointed to manage the account and is the client's primary point of contact. Once a consultant is established, a project plan and timeline should be prepared. This becomes the blue print for deadlines and ensures that both parties understand and agree on the goods.

The agency also familiarises itself with the client's business at workshops. Once the agency has a complete understanding of the business, the team will prepare a brand-position with the client.

The design process starts when everyone agrees on the brand architecture.

Most agencies supply their clients with two or three directions for a logo design and basic 'look and feel', to give the client an idea of the various ways in which a logo can be applied.

The process only continues once the client makes a choice and is comfortable with a

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design.

Then the logo will be applied to the stationery, internal and external signage, and all promotional items.

The branding process is completed when all items scoped at the outset of the project are signed off by the client, and the agency provides a brand manual or tool kit as a guideline for future applications of the brand.

"Investing in your brand is investing in the future of your business. Smaller companies should not feel intimidated by the idea of commissioning a branding agency to assist them to develop their brand.

"After all, we thrive on using our knowledge to catapult our clients into the market," he says.

● For more information, visit www.mgmcom.co.za.

Coaching for those who want to stay ahead

BY DR SANDRA PERKINS

In our changing world and workplace, new work habits are required. Most of us are aware that a good reputation today does not guarantee continued success tomorrow.

Professionals need to constantly condition, innovate, motivate and refresh their work styles, skills and behaviours.

In today's competitive and changing environment, a business coach isn't a luxury, it is a necessity in many cases.

Coaching is the powerful, collaborative relationship between a coach and willing individual, which enables – through a process of discovery, goal setting and strategic actions – the realisation of extraordinary results.

Coaching is inter-mental, in that collaboration develops the coach

and the individual being coached.

Coaching is also a body of knowledge, a technology and a style of relating that focuses on the development of human potential.

It can take place on an individual level focusing on life skills, or on a business or organisational level aligning the person being coached to the core ideology of the company, in his or her quest to become a superior performer.

A coaching session begins with an overview and understanding of the individual's professional background, how the individual got to where he is in his career, what they want from coaching and hope to gain from the sessions, and where he wants to go in his life.

The coach then acts as a guide to assist in setting and achieving specific goals.

Frequently, a coaching session

is prompted by a career turning point that requires specialised support.

A coach works privately with the individual and provides objective, professional support and guidance to increase performance, satisfaction and fulfilment.

This is accomplished by the coach and individual building on and enhancing the talents that the individual already has, and to acquire extra skills, perspectives that he or she desires and needs.

In the organisational environment, coaching uses the dynamics of the company, teams and individual members to enable the coaching process to evolve the individual's capacity for learning and renewal into achieving his or her goals and often, surprisingly, breakthrough results.

In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, January to

February 1998, entitled 'The employee customer profit chain at Sears' by Rucci, Kirn and Quinn, a model was developed to study the effects of executive coaching in a public sector municipal agency.

All 31 managers underwent a conventional managerial training program, followed by eight weeks of personal executive coaching.

Training which included goal-setting, collaborative problem solving, practice, feedback, supervisory involvement, evaluation of end results, and a public presentation, increased productivity by 22.4%.

Compared to training alone, the training and coaching together increased productivity by 88%.

In recent research by Daniel Goleman, author of *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, the business case for coaching is strongly presented in its

application to enhance and expand the emotional intelligence of leaders.

Continual self-discovery is crucial to the development of a leader's own emotions, team and social skills.

These enable him or her to lead effectively in today's business world.

Goleman recommends that leaders, executives and motivated professionals relentlessly seek the truth about themselves.

He recommends the coaching process for self-discovery and personal reinventing.

The coaching process, with its focus on self-assessment, as well as purposeful and appropriate assessment of one's self by others in the workplace, provides the ideal vehicle for personal and professional growth.

● Perkins is a director of Orion Business Solutions, and can be contacted at ☎ 011 718 6484 or www.oriongroup.co.za.