



## **8 Ways to Develop a Consistent Company Image** **By Lois Carter Fay, APR**

Besides your excellent product or service, your company image is your most important asset. It can mean the difference between attracting quality clients and going bankrupt. A good company image can help you recruit and retain employees, grow your bottom line, and gain national recognition. Here are eight ways to develop your consistent company image, or brand:

### **1. Design a memorable logo.**

Your logo tells your customers and prospects who you are. In many cases, it also tells what you do or sell. It can be simple, like the Nike "Swoosh", or more elaborate, like the NBC "Peacock". It generally consists of a symbol or icon along with the name of your company. It may also include a descriptive tagline that explains what you do.

Your logo should be used in exactly the same way on all of your printed and electronic materials. If you develop your corporate identity package, i.e., business cards, letterhead, envelopes, mailing labels, fax cover sheet, company forms, invoices, etc., at the same time you create your logo, you can easily see that everything is consistent.

Because so much of today's business is conducted via email and the Internet, you will also want to create an electronic version of your letterhead and other materials, and develop a website that reflects the same design.

As time goes on, you will want to use your logo on brochures, newsletters and all of your marketing materials, as well, so be sure to prepare a style book for your logo to make it clear to anyone how your logo can be used.

### **2. Develop a succinct tagline.**



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A tagline is a brief one-to-eight-word statement that paints a picture of what your company is all about. For instance, NASA Langley's Technology Commercialization Program Office, tasked with transferring technology developed for aerospace to commercial ventures, uses the tagline, "Making Aerospace Commonplace"; PaperWorks, a woman-owned print brokering firm in Virginia Beach uses the tagline, "She's my printer"; and a Virginia Beach image consultant, Image-Inations by Sandy Dumont, uses, "Branding for People" as its memorable statement. Rowena Fullinwider, owner of Rowena's, a gourmet foods company in Norfolk, Va., (<http://www.rowenas.com>), says, "I'm Rowena Fullinwider and as we say at Rowena's, 'Open your mouth full and wider and eat more cake!'"

What do you do or sell? Can you sum it up in just a few descriptive words?

### **3. Create a 30-second sound bite.**

Now that you have your tagline, it's time to expand your brief statement to a clear, targeted 30-second commercial for your business. You will need to craft your statement to pique your listener's interest, but try not to go over 30 seconds or you will see people's eyes glazing over.

There are four key elements to developing a good 30-second introduction: (1) think in visuals and use very descriptive words, (2) use clear, simple language that everyone can understand; (3) try to convey your unique selling proposition (or what makes you better/different than your competitors); and (4) use examples and personal stories about your successes that your listener can identify with. If you can also include an emotional connection that touches the heart of your listener, your introduction will be even better.

Consider an introduction like the one I use for my marketing consulting firm. "Hi. My name is Lois Carter Fay. My company is Strategic Business Partners. Our clients hire us to help them develop creative marketing ideas and strategies to grow their business. As a result of our publicity efforts, one of our clients received over 50 feature articles and mentions about their organization in just eight months. It resulted in 8 new clients for them. Again, I'm Lois Carter Fay, Strategic Business Partners."

Remember to say your name and company name at the beginning and at the end of your introduction. People often forget who you are once you've gone through your mini sales pitch. If you say something that piques their interest, you want them to remember who you are, so repeat your name and company at the end.

### **4. Target your message.**



Your target market must be identified and chosen before you can develop your marketing materials. Analyze your customer base and determine who your best and most profitable customers are. Using a series of concentric circles (like a target) with your general market in the outermost circle, winnow your target down to the center, getting more and more specific as you move toward the center.

What are the demographics of your customer? If your company is a business-to-business company, do you sell to government, industrial, or retail customers? What are your customers' annual sales figures? Do you work with companies internationally, nationally, regionally or locally? How long have they been in business? Do you need to reach a specific individual, such as the purchasing agent, at the company? Why do they choose your company as a provider?

Remember, if you are a fox, you can't interest a duck in having dinner with you. So quit trying to reach EVERYONE and start talking only to the people who care about your message.

#### **5. Put it all together.**

Now that you know whom you need to reach with your message, have a good logo and tagline, and you have developed your 30-second business introduction, it's time to begin creating your marketing materials. Most companies cannot afford to develop and print several brochures at the same time, so consider creating a marketing package over time as you can afford it.

A simple trifold brochure is often a good place to start. It is inexpensive to print and can be handed out in abundance at trade shows or during presentations, and it can be designed to do double duty as a direct-mail piece.

You may also want to consider developing a two-pocket presentation folder, die-cut to hold your business card, that includes your logo and has the same look and feel of your marketing materials. It can be used as a marketing/sales folder, too. Other common marketing pieces include: a more in-depth corporate brochure, an annual report, product sheets, news releases, management biographies, sales or training videos, direct-mail promotions, ads, website(s), and email marketing campaigns. Prioritize your marketing support materials needs and proceed with developing your complete package. Remember to avoid using perishable data—that is, information that will be come out of date quickly—in your materials so that they are long-lasting.



**6. Say what you mean and mean what you say.**

Always be clear and honest in your communications to all of your target audiences—your customers and prospects, employees, the media, everyone. It's best to be as up-front as you can be even in a crisis. Doing what you say you are going to do when you agree to do it is very important. Your reputation and your long-term success depend on it. The key is to UNDER promise and OVER deliver.

**7. Use others to tell your story.**

When your customers or the media tell your story, it is seen as more credible. That's why it's good to use testimonials from your clients in your marketing materials. You can include a section in one or more of your brochures as well as on your website. Don't be bashful. Ask your customers to either write or tell you how you are doing. You'll need their permission to include their testimonials in your materials, but most customers will be very happy approve its use. If your customers are not confident with their writing, you can even interview them and write it for them. Then have them put it on their letterhead and sign it.

Keeping the media informed about what your company is doing is also important. News releases can generate feature stories, inclusion in trend stories, briefs and mentions in publications. When the reporter calls, be sure to take the call and answer with forthright calmness. Few reporters are "out to get you" and most are very concerned about accuracy. Speak clearly and ask questions to make sure you are understood. Be as helpful as you can because the reporter will remember you, and it's likely he will call you again when he's doing a story on your industry.

**8. Do it the same way, every time.**

Consistency of your marketing message is very important. Consistency, consistency, consistency. And did I mention consistency? Use the same marketing message over and over until you are so bored you feel like heading straight to the refrigerator. And then say it some more.

Make sure that all of your materials convey the same message and are presented with the same look and feel. Always use your logo and tagline in the same way—consistent colors, design and placement. It should be readily apparent when someone looks at your ads, brochures, newsletters, website, business signage and any other materials that these are all from the same company. If you maintain the integrity of the overall "look and feel" of all these materials, you will begin to project a strong brand.



Keep your employees on target by communicating your marketing message to them, as well. They are your ambassadors and they may be the only contact your customer has with your company. It is vital that they are “on board” with your marketing message and completely understand what you are saying.

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Self-employed since 1990, Lois Carter Fay is the owner of [Strategic Business Partners](#), a marketing consulting firm that develops ideas and strategies to grow your business, [Words For Websites](#), a website writing and strategy business, and the [Marketing Idea Shop](#), an online resource for marketers and small businesses. She works with small business owners and managers to help them with all of their marketing and public relations issues. Find out more at <http://www.marketingideashop.com> .

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