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PRINTTIPS™

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There's No Second Chance To Make A First Impression

How many times have you heard that? Probably out of your mother's mouth—more times than you care to think about! The fact is, it's true. There is only one chance to make a first impression, so it is very important that the impression you make is a good one.

As a company, the impression you make on your clients is called your 'image'. This involves more than just first impressions. It includes all the contacts you have with your clients. Thus, you have two challenges: make a good first impression, and make sure every subsequent impression is as good as the first. Consistency is what builds a company image.

Company Image

A company image is what others think and feel about your company. It is

created by a combination of many factors, such as your logo, web site, product packaging, the look of your store or offices, how your employees interact with customers, the look of your stationery, business cards, advertisements and your hours of operation. How you and your employees are dressed can also affect your image.

Your company has an image, whether or not you have tried to create it. Your customers have impressions about your company. Every contact they have with you gives them an impression. If you want them to have a particular impression, there are choices you can make to ensure the impression you desire.

Decide what image you want to cultivate. Your company may have the lowest prices in town, or you may focus on quality and service instead of low

prices. Check around and see what the competition is doing. Analyze how your company and its products are the same as and different from your competition. Conduct a survey to learn what image of your company your target market currently holds. Find out what your competitors think of you as well. This will help you decide whether you want to continue to support your current image or work to change it.

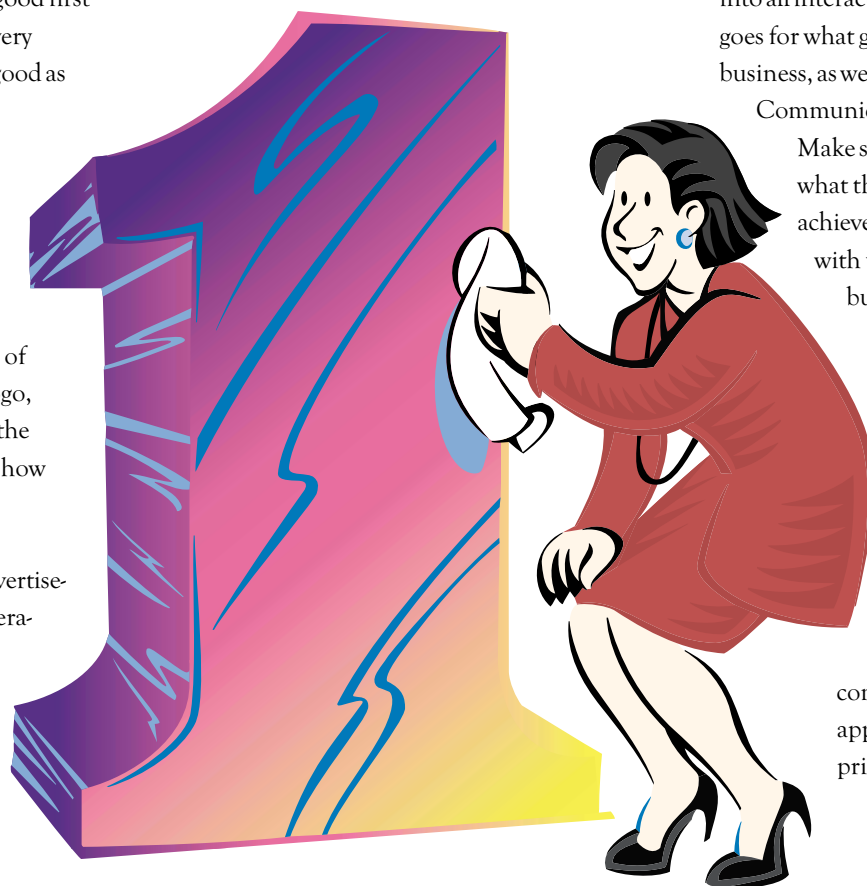
When you decide what you want your image to be, the next step is to build that into all interactions with customers. This goes for what goes on inside your business, as well as how you advertise.

Communicate with your employees.

Make sure they understand fully what the company wants to achieve. Customer interactions with your staff will do a lot to build your image.

Your Company Logo

Often, your logo is what a customer notices first. It should be simple, easily recognizable, and easily reproducible. A logo is a graphic representation of your company image. It should appear on every visual piece of printed matter your company



produces that reaches the public. It should be present on all signage, business stationery, business cards, advertisements, and promotional products and literature.

Think about the ways that your logo will be reproduced. Some possibilities are print advertisements, television, catalogs, stationery, packaging, promotional items and on the web. Take all of these into account when you design your logo. Advertisements in magazines, flyers, newspapers, specialty publications and newsletters are reproduced in different ways. Your logo should be designed so that it will look crisp, clean and attractive no matter where you reproduce it. Often this means that a good logo has several different forms. If you design a full color air-brushed logo for the side of your company van, make sure that you can get a recognizable version of it in one or two colors to put on your stationery.

When picking your company colors, for example, talk to us first. A magazine might reproduce your logo in four color process. This means that all colors are created with four translucent inks laid down in a dot pattern. The ink colors are cyan, magenta, yellow and black. These inks do very well in combination to create most colors. But there are some colors, like



orange for example, that don't translate very well at all.

If your company color is one that does not reproduce well in four color process, the magazine must print a special spot color to make it look right. This is very costly. The reason that some companies go to this expense is that it will produce a vibrant, distinctive look that will stand out on the page. But if your budget doesn't allow for this kind of extra expense, pick company colors that translate from spot color into process color with little or no difference in appearance.

Logos in two or more colors that have tight registration (the colors touch each other) will be more costly to print. Consider designing the logo so that it can be reproduced as four, three, two or one color, and still have a similar impact. Consider specialty processes like foiling, die cutting and embossing to enhance your logo design on presentation folders or high-end brochures.

It is a good idea to create a file of logos, brochure designs and advertisements that you like. Logo examples from other companies, particularly ones that you like, can help you create something for yourself. This is true whether you design your logo yourself, have a graphic artist come up with the concept, or bring in your ideas to us. Analyzing why a collection of marketing materials really catch your eye will help you determine what it is you want in your own logo and design elements.

A good logo will get attention. If your yellow page ad is side by side with your competitor in the phone book, your logo may be the only reason a potential customer will call your company first.

No matter who designs your logo, make sure you get it in a variety of forms. You want it in black and white to give to a printer, color separated if it's in more

than one color. Get your logo on disk as well, in an eps format created in an illustration program, like Adobe Illustrator. Make sure all the fonts are outlined, or converted to paths. Have it saved as a jpeg and a gif file, so you will have something to use on your web page.

Marketing Communications

All of your brochures, advertisements, packaging and stationery should reflect your company image. If you want to be known as a high quality company, then make sure your printed matter and all materials say 'Quality' in every way.

Customer Service

Customer service policies do a lot to impact your image. Make sure they are consistent with the image goals you have set. One company had a policy that they would take back anything. Legend has it that this company refunded a set of tires for a customer... but the company doesn't sell tires!! This company has created an image that it will do anything for its customers.

Publicity and Promotions

Where are you advertising? If your company is an expensive exclusive resort, then advertising in the bargain shoppers circular would not bring you many customers. However, an ad placed in a Travel or Leisure magazine might do very well. Place your ads in publications that your clientele, or your desired clientele will read.

If your business is an elegant restaurant, then supporting a local symphony hall, or advertising in its program would bring attention from potential customers. A pizza place might print handouts with the local football schedule, along with a coupon for a free pitcher after a game. Match the promotional events that you support to your image.

Know Thyself, Know Thy Customers!

Who are the people you want to attract to your business? The better you know who you want to attract, i.e. what attracts them, the better able you will be to design a company image that works

How does your company interact with its customers? Are you product based, service based, or both? Think of ways you can improve customer relations. Employee-customer contact is a big part of customer relations.

Something as simple as the way your employees answer the phone can leave an indelible impression of your company as a whole. Make sure customers are noticed and attended to as soon as they enter your door. If the employee is too busy to serve the customer immediately, the employee should acknowledge the customer with “I’ll be right with you” or “I’ll find someone to help you shortly.” People appreciate and respond to being noticed.

Another way to find ideas to improve your company image is to take a good look at your competitors. Study the companies that are successful and research what they did to get that way. Look at what they are doing to stay that way. Look at advertising, promotions, and what kinds of events and programs these companies support.

Q. What are the qualities of a good Customer Service Representative?

A. A friendly attitude is the number one quality in a Customer Service Representative. Skills and product knowledge can be taught but a positive attitude has to be a pre-existing condition. Flexibility is also important. Customer Service Reps who have flexibility to make decisions will help keep customers happy.

Here is an example of a Customer Service Representative that made a

difference. I recently called my credit card company to cancel a credit card. This card had a higher interest rate than my new credit card and my limit was based on a security deposit. I had decided I wanted only one card and my new, unsecured card had a better rate and higher limit.

The Customer Service Representative I talked to was cordial and friendly. He asked why I was cancelling and offered to return my deposit. He increased my limit and pointed out that as long as I didn’t use the card, I would not pay the higher interest but it would be there in an emergency.

He had the authority to do all this on the spot. This, plus his friendly but not pushy attitude, convinced me to keep doing business with his company.

What could have been an account loss for the company turned out to be a positive customer service experience.

The described situation is not a given. With all the technological advances available to help businesses sell more, be more, do more, the human touch seems to be an antiquated notion. However, real life customer service will continue to be a “make” or “break” proposition for small business owners.

Good customer service representatives are friendly people who care and are anxious to solve problems whether they know the answer or not. Each customer is unique and each problem has a solution that will make everybody happy. This attitude in a Customer Service Representative will net you happy customers.

Are You On The Web?

TRICKS & tips

A web presence can be an important tool for business development when used properly. Sorting out fact from sales pitch and finding the internet presence provider that will do the job for your company takes research. If you are considering a web site, do some web surfing to see what your competitors are doing. Have these URL's ready to show as examples when you shop for a provider and web site creator.

Your web site is not going to generate visitors just by virtue of being there. Site promotion is critical to the success of this portion of your marketing. Site submission programs abound on the internet and in the software isles. We know that proper submission to credible search engines and directories applicable to your business can take countless hours of your precious time. Not only that, the process needs to be repeated at least quarterly if not monthly to assure your visibility.

Be sure to put your URL (site internet address) on all your advertising materials.

Your URL should appear on your letterhead, business cards, brochures, flyers, print, radio and TV ads.

The use of promotional products to promote your web site to clients and prospects is another excellent tool of the trade. If your customers are local, print your web site very large (one letter per page) and hang it in your shop window! One company had bumper stickers made with just their web site printed on them. People were so curious to find out what it was, that they were flooded with visitors!



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