

Foundations—a Pedestal Group Publication

VOLUME 11, DECEMBER

FOUNDATIONS

The Pedestal Group

What Will Your Brand Be in 2010?

Special points of interest:

- *Backup Solutions*
- *Google Searching*
- *Greening Your Business*

AND MORE!

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Branding is constantly on the minds of all business owners. According to Seth Godin, author, blogger, and noted marketing specialist, “A brand is the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another”. That is a much broader definition of a brand than the usual take and we believe it is worth exploring.

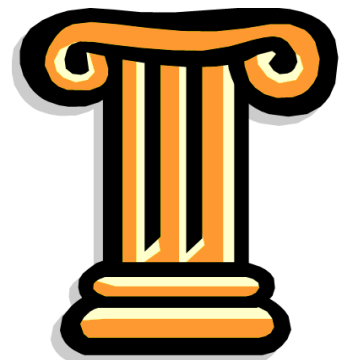
If a brand is a set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships, then a good branding strategy must encompass all four of these areas.

Expectations—if you have never worked with a company or customer, how can you set expectations? This is done through your website, marketing materials, process description, how you present yourself and even how you answer the phone. If your brochure looks “homemade”, the client will make certain assumptions about what will happen if they work with you. On the other hand, if your materials and website are professional and solid, they will make different

assumptions. This also means the quality of your phone messages, what you leave on their voice mail, and grammar, punctuation and spelling in your emails can also affect how you are perceived.

December is a great time to review each of these to ensure it meets your quality standards. If you worry you are to invested, find someone to help you review the materials and really question what message is being presented and what assumptions are being made.

But what if you have worked with the client before? Review each current client and determine what their expectations are in the areas that are important to your business. Do you know what their expectation is in customer support? Have they told you if things are good or bad, or are you making an assumption? What is that assumption based on? It is vital to understand for each area of your business what your current client’s expectations are and if those are acceptable. There is nothing worse than losing a client and not knowing why.



Create your 2010 Branding Strategy NOW

Once you’ve done your review, talk to clients and find out what expectations they had at the beginning of the process and how that differed. Most offices are slower in December and people are not anxious to start a new project so they are more willing to have conversations. Another option is to take the person out for a cup of coffee and discuss it. This gives you a chance to really find out what they thought would happen and tailor your messages to match what you want to happen in 2010.

Memories—Memories are very tied to expectations. It is easier to remember when your expectations didn’t match the

Branding (con't)



result—for the good or bad—but even then, a customer's memory can become very short if not cultivated. Contacting customers periodically and following up on products or services purchased in the past is a great way to reinforce good memories. Or, if there is a problem, those calls can help you find out and fix a problem. Memories of fixed problems often last longer than just things that went well, so NEVER shy away from those situations—jump on them!

Stories—We have talked in this newsletter before about the importance of stories. Stories help others relate to people and experiences in ways that statements or questions cannot. A great way to help customers have the right expectations, remember what happened and have stories to tell is to get testimonials and write case studies. A testimonial is written by the person for your

**EXPECTATIONS,
MEMORIES,
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ALL GO INTO
YOUR BRAND**

company. It has their name and company name on it and let's others know they are willing to put their stamp of approval on your company. That is obviously a great way to help the customer remember what happened and share their story! And, it helps new clients see what is possible when working with your company.

The best way to manage testimonials is to ask the person if they are willing to provide one, and then when they agree offer to draft something for them to edit. This goes for LinkedIn Recommendations, Yelp and other websites that showcase user-testimonials as well as testimonials you will use on your website and in print. Offering to write the testimonial gives you the control to know you are getting the document you need and means you don't have to wait as long as you would if the customer had to start from scratch. For the client, this means they don't have to invest much time to achieve the result an often will sign off on the document you present.

Relationships—Relationships are absolutely key in business today. A strong relationship can help get you through difficult situations as well as bring in more business when things are going well. But just like in your

personal life, you can NEVER take those relationships for granted. There is nothing worse than a client who feels they have a good relationship with you until a good sales person from a competitor comes in.

Review these relationships from that sales person's point of view. If a good sales person asked your clients how often there is communication from your company, how often issues come up and how quickly are they resolved, are interactions professional and timely, etc., what would your clients answer? Obviously you won't be able to answer 100%, but you should have an idea of what they would say. If you can't tell, check your relationship management software for how often you contact them and what they say. If each call or email is met with "we're fine", see how you can dig deeper. While it is certainly possible they are fine, knowing is always better than finding out when they turn to a competitor.

Your brand is no longer just a logo and advertising. Branding involves a great deal more and this definition of Expectations, Memories, Stories and Relationships can help you tailor your branding strategy for 2010.

A Personal Story of Backups

Recently, I changed backup methods for my system. I have certainly been a big proponent of backing up a system regularly and have seen too many situations end badly when someone MEANT to backup but never got there. I was struck by this issue again when I did a 15 day trial of Backblaze. I liked Backblaze because it is constantly backing up through an encrypted connection, had very little set

up and works with both PCs and Macintosh computers. It also backs up external hard drives connected to your system (if you choose).

What was a big surprise was that it took over a week to finish backing up my files! I knew I had a great deal of stuff, but it never occurred to me just how much stuff I truly had. Seeing the volume of material I could have

lost was a real wake up call. And, now that I'm backing up all the time, I am more apt to store things on my computer. Since I have had two external hard drives fail on me over the last five years, this was always in the back of my mind.

I highly recommend Backblaze at www.backblaze.com. Regardless, make it a point to back up regularly!

Google's New Real-Time Search

Google launched the new real-time search feature this month. Many people are pretty excited about it but how can you use it?

When you type keywords into Google, in the past you got back headlines and information that had been on the web long enough for Google to see it and add it to their database. Normally when you type in keywords, Google gives you back stories, photos and videos related to that topic. Now, you can get those as well as real-time updates from people on Twitter, Facebook and other sources that are updated all the time.

To access the new features, under the search box select Web: Latest and click the Plus next to SHOW OPTIONS.



This will open the panel for what shows in your search options. Now when you search, you will see the topics as you normally would, but you will also see other types of results including blog postings that have happened recently and updates from sites like Twitter.

In the illustration below, you will notice the green highlighted area says the results will update as they become available. That means that as long as you stay on the Google search page, you will see real time updates appear for that topic. It was very interesting

you can bring up your search and keep it open for as long as you would like to trend that topic.



A screenshot of Google search results for "branding strategies" with a jagged, torn-edge border. A green box at the top says "New results will appear below as they become available. Stop updating". Below are several search results with yellow highlights:

- RT @SiegelGale: S+G **Strategy** Director Larry Vincent on AT&T's conflicting **#brand** messages re: wireless data usage
Siegel+Gale = Wireless disconnect ⚡ - siegelgale.com
- gail_nelson - twitter.com - 3 minutes ago
- Top Experts from Tiffany & Co.; Johnson & Johnson; Gucci America ...**
Dec 14, 2009 ... **strategies** for conquering counterfeiters on the Internet. ... Chuck Williams , Manager of **Brand** Protection, Cisco Systems for US, ...
www.cnbc.com/id/34417335 - 6 minutes ago
- Blogs Home - HarvardBusiness.org**
Dec 14, 2009 ... But when Disney is on their game, their 3D **branding** machine creates ... between high level corporate **strategy** and the marketing function. ...
blogs.harvardbusiness.org/.../branding/index.php?cm... - 10 minutes ago
- Elevate your **brand** in 2010 by using Social Media platforms to execute a Social Marketing **strategy**.
tedrubin - twitter.com - 10 minutes ago
- GasPedal's Word of Mouth Marketing Blog**
Dec 14, 2009 ... From governance to **brand** presence to employee engagement, learn Cisco's best word of mouth research (3), word of mouth **strategy** (1) ...
gaspedal.com/blog/ - 13 minutes ago
- Building Brand Awareness – Use all 5 Senses**
Dec 14, 2009 ... But, it is this advertising that builds company brand awareness. ... E-smart24:
Finding a good home based business **branding strategy** ...

pulling this screen shot for the article because it updated four times in the time it took to highlight the shot!

Now, instead of having to run a search multiple times in a day to see the latest results or try to find the most current research on your own,

For many, this will eliminate the need for additional search tools to comb Twitter and other sites like it for information. Try it with something you know is being updated and you will be surprised how much use you will find for it!

Greening Your Business

Recently, Small Business Trends asked their readers for their best ways to green up their businesses. I submitted one suggesting you connect your printer to one computer and not the network. Then to print, you have to save the item to a thumb drive and go to that workstation. It truly makes you think about what you print and why. I cut down on paper costs, toner costs and really

considered my work more carefully.

Others have come through with some great thoughts on ways you can help reduce, reuse and recycle.

In many ways going green can save you money—using less means less to replace! Some of the easiest to implement include:

Use both sides of the paper. If your

printer or copier can be set to duplex printing as the default, even better.

Put lights on timers.

Turn off monitors when not in use—monitors use a lot of electricity and can get hot when they run for long

Try some of these tips— they can save money as well!

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

Greening Your Business (con't)

periods of time.

Say NO to bags—do you really need a bag for that one item you picked up? Ask for no bag when you can handle the items on your own.

Unplug chargers that aren't connected



**Going
Green!**

to devices. They pull power whether they are in use or not.

Remove 1-2 florescent blubs from fixtures in areas where the light isn't as necessary. Most people don't notice the change

and it saves quite a bit of electricity and cuts down on replacement bulbs.

Recycle your ink cartridges. Many office supply companies have incentive programs to recycle used ink cartridges. Staples gives you money back!

Consider using pencils for all but your legal documents. They last longer, are cheaper and you don't throw out the whole thing at the end like a pen. It was good enough for Leonardo Da Vinci!

Rechargeable batteries are great for wireless mice, keyboards and other office devices. Just make sure you have enough to have some charging and some in the devices at the same

time.

Put live plants in your office—this helps filter the air and doesn't have the manufacturing costs of silk or plastic.

Recycle old equipment—many computer manufacturers will take back old equipment or use a service like <http://www.gazelle.com/> which will pay you cash for old electronics.

Going green doesn't have to cost more nor does it have to slow down your business. Get a little creative and you can build a win-win!

For more tips, check out <http://www.smallbiztrends.com/green-business-tips.pdf>