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## **Imprinting Your Brand on Your Client's Mind**

By Karin K. Schaff

**Warning:** when you're developing marketing, sales, and communications materials, red flags should waive if you hear these statements:

- Let's tweak the logo to make it stand out more on that light background
- Maybe we can abbreviate the company name since space is tight
- It's ok if the logo is in different places on your web pages and print ads
- And the ad industry's favorite: Can we make the logo bigger?

The truth is, you can do all of these things, and some companies do. But following these suggestions won't boost your brand awareness. In fact, they could make it worse! If you want your clients to know you and your firm, the real solution is to build brand continuity and consistency in your materials.

Your brand is the personal, emotional tie between you and your clients. Your brand is more than just a logo—it's the sum of your advertising, customer service, product and service development, and every other aspect of your business that touches the client.

Why is brand design consistency across all of your programs and materials so important? Because your logo is your firm's face to the marketplace; it provides the visual foundation and strategy from which all your materials should be designed. When you constantly tweak or reinvent your brand to make it "match" certain environments, you weaken your logo's familiarity among your clients. When you change the design of your logo each time, you're breaking the visual relationship you've created with that client. You're forcing clients to "re-engage" or be "re-introduced" to your practice each time.

In fact, making even simple changes to your logo design not only confuses your clients, it can also jeopardize your brand's value and long-term equity. All marketing and communication materials need to have synergy to ensure that your firm's message stands out and is noticed. Through consistency strategies, brands like AOL and GE have become household names--and they've created brand loyalty and solid equity.

Think of all the advertising "noise" out there. Consumers and businesses are bombarded with visual, textual, and auditory messages hundreds of times a day. To break through, you have to build a synergistic theme throughout all of your marketing and sales materials and communication channels. This is critical because it will ensure that your audience knows who you are, what you have to offer, and the value you bring to them time and time again. This builds brand awareness, recognition, and ultimately, long-term loyalty and brand preference.

There are many benefits to achieving brand continuity. You'll create new programs and materials more quickly and easily, and they'll result in a higher return on your precious marketing investment. Here are some quick questions to help you assess your brand's continuity:

1. Are your logo's color, size, and font style consistent throughout all company materials? Do you have a brand standards guide to ensure everyone knows the "dos and don'ts" for using your logo in different environments both offline and online?
2. If your logo needs to be manipulated to fit into a specific design, is it clear how the logo can be changed? Does the designer make changes based only on the project's needs--or for the good of your brand?
3. In your print advertising campaign, do you have a consistent design template with the logo and general contact information (phone, fax, Web URL, etc.) in the same location?
4. Do you have a consistent call-to-action throughout your marketing materials? If so, what is it, and is it stated the same way throughout all your materials?
5. If you put all your marketing and sales materials out on your desk, do they all look similar, like they're from the same firm? Or do they look as if several firms were sending them?
6. Are what you do and offer immediately clear by just looking at your logo and tagline?
7. What ties all of your materials together: the font style, colors, layout, messaging (text), logo placement, logo structure, etc.? What is the main synergy thread that ties them together? Is that thread strong enough to support your brand continuity?
8. Do you have your logo on all materials used internally and externally? Showcasing your logo to your internal as well as your external audience is key to maintaining and strengthening 'brand pride' from the inside out.

One trap that some firms fall into is "mini-branding" or "sub-branding"—they create new logos and looks for each new service. It's in your best interest to keep your branding consistent across your products and services, and not create "dueling logos" in your materials. And unless you have an unlimited marketing budget that allows you to promote each sub-brand, you're going to be much further ahead financially to do straightforward promotion that strengthens your existing brand.

Your entire company is your brand, not just a product or specific service. As [Aristotle](#) said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

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To learn more about brand continuity and how to use it successfully in your marketing and communications practices, contact Karin K. Schaff at [kschaff@3rdfloorup.com](mailto:kschaff@3rdfloorup.com).