



Five Ways to Transform Your Small Business into a Big Brand

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Branding a business is a very personal and very human activity. Every business is built by someone like you and me, an ordinary person trying to do something extraordinary. Here are 5 tips for transforming your small business into something extraordinary, a big brand.

1. Recognize the Paradox: Small Ideas Are Big

In the branding business, people talk a lot about the “big idea.”

But I say, “Forget the big idea, go for a small idea.”

There’s a fundamental paradox of business ideas: the bigger the idea, the simpler and more focused it will be – so that it can occupy a unique niche and dominate its category. For example, FedEx’s brand promise is its advertising tagline: “Your package will get there overnight. Guaranteed.” In breakthrough branding, if you can’t explain your business idea successfully to a ten-year-old in seven words or less, you don’t have a clear-cut idea for your business.



2. Be the Mouse That Roared

The Internet and social media make it easy to speak to many every time you speak. But to be effective, you've got to grab people's attention with a different product message and style. Sandra Lee created a new cooking concept and came up with a catchy name while walking down the aisle in a grocery store one day and seeing bags of semisweet chocolate for cooking. That's sort of what I'm doing, she thought, because her dishes are made up of about 70 percent packaged ingredients and 30 percent fresh foods. While Lee's concept is more than semi-controversial with traditional cooks, she has a thriving business with adoring fans who love her easy-to-prepare recipes and her appealing personal brand who follow her on the Internet and on television.

3. Find the "White Space" – an unmet emotional need.

You know you have a viable business idea when you find the "white space," which is really just a need in the marketplace that no one is filling. Look for a powerful emotional need, a big want that people have.

Builder Fred Carl Jr, was designing his own kitchen and his wife, Margaret, wanted a heavy-duty gas range like she grew up with but they weren't made anymore. Carl called manufacturers and told them about his idea: a commercial-style range for the home. Everyone thought he was crazy. Finally, he persuaded one manufacturer to produce his ranges on a limited basis. Perhaps you've guessed by now: Carl called his range "Viking" since they were substantial, and enduring. He started out using his own money and credit cards from his hometown in Mississippi, and the Viking stove was an immediate success.

4. Create a memorable, Internet-ownable name.



Today, a company or brand name must be especially odd to be one that you can own on the Internet. One way that can lead to abundant name options is to create a compound name. Put two different words together and you'll find there are lots of options for naming. It's best if one or both of the words conveys some idea of your business, like YouTube, Red Bull, PayPal, Zipcar, Netflix, Dropbox, Instagram, and Facebook.

You can tweak a word to create an Internet-ready name. Zappos was a tweak of the Spanish word for shoes, zapatos. Another option is to blend parts of words. Skype's name came from sky and peer-to-peer. Or you can look for a name from a totally different arena. Andy Rubin collects robots, a fascination that led him to name his smartphone Android. You can always opt for a totally made-up name to get a name that you can own like Lululemon, which has alliteration too, or Zynga, which was named after CEO Mark Pinkus' dog.

5. Don't be innocent about branding.

Having a great product is key, but having breakthrough branding will help you get noticed. With its name, Innocent and saucy tagline, "The fruit, the whole fruit, and nothing but the fruit," the U.K. beverage company hammered in its brand's authenticity— healthy fruit drinks made of 100 percent fresh ingredients. The logo is a quirky apple shape, almost like a child's drawing, with two eyes and a halo above. The company extended its playful approach to its labels, once including "plum nuns" among its ingredients, getting tons of PR and a reprimand from a government agency to change the labels or "start putting said items in your drinks." Innocent sold a stake to Coca-Cola and the brand is expanding globally.



The password to entering the breakthrough branding set is saying Yes! to standing out and doing things differently from your competitors from your brand idea, to your name, to your visual identity to all of your marketing activities.