

Creating A Brand

The following is a transcript from a speech by Todd Rhoda to Hedge Fund Managers and RIAs, at the DLJ/ Pershing conference, "Strategic Insights."

Thank you for letting me chat with you today on the effective *design* aspects of creating a brand.

As a designer, I'm more accustomed to one-on-one presentations or small conference rooms. So, my staff reminded me that since I was giving a speech; it would be helpful to tell a joke. So, here is my joke.

How many designers does it take to screw in a light bulb?

Answer: Does it *have* to be a light bulb? [Laughter] Thank you for your support of my joke. [Laughter]

The topics I want to cover today are:

- Branding Overview, and by branding I mean the entire perception of your firm.
- Logos, a logo embellishes your brand.
- Web Sites, there's been an immense explosion of web sites.
- Print Collateral, we'll talk about if print is still relevant.
- Q&A

The point I want to make throughout this presentation is that a focus on branding always positively influences a company.

And, I promise not to use the words "Synergy" or "Paradigm", anywhere during my presentation.

[Branding Overview]

The goal of all branding is an *emotional tie* between your clients and you.

Branding isn't simply slapping a logo on a hat or coffee mug. It's the whole package of the work you do. *Your identity.*

You want people to idealize you.

Something we ask in our studio with regard to brand is, "Who is our best client...why?" And, conversely, "Who is our worst client...why?" It tells us a lot.

What does *your* best client see in you and your relationship with them?

The biggest misconception in branding is the belief that branding is about *market share*... When in fact it will always be about MIND AND EMOTIONAL share.

A great book out there right now is, *Emotional Branding* by Marc Gobe, which goes into some very intriguing detail about what, obviously on the surface, seems like common sense.

No matter how big or small you are, a focus on mind and emotional share will help you retain and attract clients.

That's what killed so many of the dot coms. They thought that throwing money at huge ad buys was enough. How many people here saw the "cat round up" commercial on the superbowl the last two years? Pretty much everybody, right? How many people here know what company that was for? No one. See, herding house cats is not a mission statement. *You're not trying to win eyeballs; you're trying to win hearts.* They should've focused on the product, or the service, and especially their mission.

You should always be able to answer the simple question, "Who *are* you?"

There have been definitive changes in the last decade with branding and perceptions. We've moved...

from Product...to *Experience*.
from Identity...to *Personality*.
from Service...to *Relationships*.

Notice how all of these are much more focused to an *emotional tie*.

To conclude our branding section: emotional tie, emotional tie, emotional tie.

[Logos & Identity Systems]

Nothing causes more agina in executives quite like selecting the right logo for their firm.

If a picture says a thousand words then a well-executed log can tell the *whole* story of a business.

Why? Because, your Logo is your *flag*.

In a split second people know who you are. The way a flag can have an emotional charge to it, so can a logo. Think of the logos that have positive emotional responses.

This is a very small sampling of companies that get very high positive ratings.

Obviously, it's not JUST A LOGO DESIGN... It's the combination of the logo *and who you are*. [Amazon, Microsoft and NY Yankees logos shown.]

What makes your logo effective for your marketing? Recall and instant message.

Your logo is: your culture, your personality, and YOU.

With respect to the design of a logo; strategically, there is only one rule: Simplicity.

No matter what, this rule *must* be obeyed. Of course, saying "design a simple logo," is kind of like saying, "it's easy to make money on Wall Street, just buy low & sell high." A logo can not survive unless it is designed with simplicity and restraint, *because a logo seldom gets more than a glance*. In a world of clutter, the simpler the logo, the easier to remember. Simplicity implies a meaningful idea that can be easily recalled.

Recently, we were working with a firm to redo their logo. The owner called me late one night and said, "Todd, I've been looking at these for hours and I can't decide which one I like the best." I told him to hang up and look at them for one second while asking himself, "which one has the most impact?" He called back a moment later and the logo had been chosen.

One of the best ways to test the glancing at a logo is the blur test.

Here's the example of ebay. It's wildly distorted; but you can clearly see its impact.

Basically, there are three styles of logos:

Type solution [Yahoo logo shown]

Symbol solutions [Nike logo shown]

Type and Symbol solutions [Target logo shown]

A word here about the "timelessness" of a logo. The IBM logo is a perfect example. Designed in 1956, this logo is still very relevant today. The stripes were added in the 70's, purely as an attention-getting device to suggest efficiency and speed.

[IBM logo shown]

To sum up logos: *Simplicity. Simplicity. Simplicity.*

[Web Sites]

It's hard to imagine, but as a practical business application, *the web has only been around for 3,000 days*. And now, it's hard to imagine *any* business *not* having a web site.

The single most important aspect of web sites is that your message is now *accessible*, anytime and anywhere.

If people know the name of your firm, they know you. Also, It's simply easier to identify yourself to others. A few years back you had to get the address of someone, check your inventory of brochures, envelopes, and business cards; then send it out. It took three days! Obviously, whatever enthusiasm they had about you probably went right out the window.

What makes a web site effective for your marketing?

- You're always accessible
- Web sites are very easy to update. A good developer will make those sections that change most often on a site easy to update for a layman. Sections like the "Press Releases" and "White Paper."

You can market yourself more efficiently. Here's an example: Let's say you write a white paper on "Trading Long". You can put that on your site and then e-mail all of your clients and prospects to read it off the site or download. You want your site to be the place where you get to demonstrate your expertise.

What makes a good site?

- Fast download
- Good, clean graphics
- Readability
- Smart content
- EZ to use

These five are equally important; however, *first* among the equals is "Fast download." Remember, many people are coming to your site from dial-up and not broadband. If they can't see your site in the first twelve seconds after clicking, they'll move on.

The homepage is the most important page on the site and the key to a great homepage is to simplify it. Make sure it has:

- A clear logo
- Mission statement
- Navigation bar
- Graphics on a home page are optional.

What should be on your site? Here is a checklist broken down into themes:

- "*What do you do?*" This needs to be on a mission statement on the homepage and shouldn't be longer than two dozen words.
- These next two "*Why are you an expert?*" and "*Why are you unique?*" go hand in hand because you've got to define the reason that they are benefiting from being on your site. And obviously, this can break down into many subcategories.
- "History." People want to know as much as they can about you.
- "Contact Us."

When writing and designing for the web keep it simple, "Think Billboard." People *scan* web sites. They don't read them.

Here's a site that we recently worked on for Bank Audi. On the left is the original site, which had large pictures, credit cards, etc. There was a plethora of type and navigation, without any information hierarchy. Everything is the same size.

On the right is the site we created for them where we stripped out everything and replaced it with simple icons and pop out menus.

[www.bankaudi.com shown]

To sum up web sites: Make yourself accessible. Make your site robust, yet simple.

[Print]

The most common question I'm asked as a designer is, "Is print dead?" To which I respond, "Well, they sure are selling a lot of books at Amazon.com."

The answer obviously is no and for proof you need not look any further than your own clients.

One, think of your clients who are technophobes. They really *are not* interested in embracing a digital culture. They could care less if they got e-mail or surfed the web. They're afraid of their own phone machines.

Second, People like the *tactile response* of paper; feeling it in their hands, the portability of it. Show of hands: How many people here take their laptop with them to the local diner to read the *Times* on PDF? None? How many take the *Times* with them?

Third, there is a subconscious aspect that the printed word *has more truth to it*. The feeling is that if somebody went to the trouble of writing something down, then printing, binding and distributing it, it *must* be true. It's been this way ever since the time of Gutenberg.

How do you make print effective for you?

First, you don't need to spend a fortune getting a solid collateral piece out. For example, you can use a color-coated stock and imprint (or emboss) your logo on the cover. No printing per se is need.

Next, make it *flexible*. You can create a *folder with a pocket* on the right hand side. Your mission statement and/or Key text can go on the left and in the pocket you can have pre-printed sheets with your logo that can be run through a laser printer. The important thing here is getting a message out. Again, embellishing the brand. You can put whatever you'd like in that right hand pocket: new products sheets, fact sheets, press releases, etc.

I've just described a basic yet very effective print marketing piece. Use this as a starting point and move up from here.

There is one *very important rule* to remember in print collateral. And that is: *Never do chintzy*. You can do low cost. You can do small. You can do minimal pages. But never do chintzy. *If your collateral piece is chintzy. Then, your message is chintzy*. I've seen entire marketing efforts get blown to kingdom come because the marketing manager thought they could fool people by doing chintzy. Do a piece that has *value*.

To wrap up print, *Print is not dead*. It is a very effective part of the marketing mix.

[In Summary]

Hopefully, I've been brought a message to you here today:

One, endeavor for an *emotional response* to your brand.

Two, *simple logo, simple sites, simple brochures*... they stand out in a world of clutter.

Thank you for your time. Have a good conference.