

Maybe you already have all the answers; but does your team? Below are some questions to make sure you and your team have down before moving forward with spending money on your website, web marketing, SEO and social media.

1. What is your brand?

It is about the sum total of the experiences customers have with your business. This includes the visual elements of your business, but it also includes what you do, how you do it, what your customer interactions are like, the type of information you share in your marketing and on social media. All these elements help establish the trust and credibility of your business.

In one sentence, what is your brand?

2. Do you stand out?

Standing out means being different. If your brand is going to be strong, you need to be able to pinpoint what it is that makes what you do unique.

What differentiates you from others in your industry?

3. Do you have great products and services?

Even the most outgoing and charming small business owner is not going to succeed in bringing customers back, unless the product or service they provide delivers and exceeds expectations. Don't lose sight of your service – keep refining it, testing new offerings, and making sure you always put product first, not the money it brings in.

What are the top 5 services and/or products you are providing?

4. Do your customers know the face behind the product?

Find ways to make sure your customers know you and connect with the face behind the business.

What is your business' personality?

or

What do you want your customers to think of you/say about you when you finish the phone call or walk out the door?

5. Is your name and logo right?

This is essential to brand recognition and it's important to get it right the first time (changing your name and logo can be costly down the road). Your logo and name should be easily recognizable and reflect the nature and tone of your business as well as appeal to your target market.

What do you want your customers to feel when they see your name/logo?

6. Do you have a distinct voice?

A great way to ensure your distinct brand message is delivered consistently across your business is to focus on how you will communicate with customers – in-person, on the phone and on social media. Not sure what your “voice” should be? Look to other brands. What do they do that you would like to emulate? How do they greet and interact with you? What is it that they do that makes you feel good about doing business with them?

What is the best example of business you'd like to emulate (even if not in your industry)?

7. Do you build community around what you do?

A successful brand is one that is trusted and respected by customers – building a strong community online and off can help you achieve this. You don't have to spend a lot of money to do this. In fact, many successful brands concentrate almost exclusively in online and offline community building as opposed to traditional advertising. Facebook and Twitter are great outlets for this, as is a blog. Offline participation in community activities such as tradeshow, meetings, seminars, as well as hosting your own events such as workshops or loyal customer events, can all help you build community.

Why would a customer engage with you in Social Media, a blog, a trade show or event? What would your customers or prospects get out of it?

8. Are you an advocate for your business and not just a salesman?

If you are passionate about your business, be an advocate for it. Share the story behind your services, what your services have done for people, your methods and mission, and all that good stuff.

What story do you have that will help you seal the deal or get your foot in the door with a prospect?

9. Are you reliable?

Letting your customers down by failing to live up to your own promises and standards can be particularly harmful for small businesses that depend heavily on referrals. The foundation of brand loyalty lies in great service – a happy customer is a loyal customer. So make sure you are not making promises that you can't keep – whether you run a pizza business and pledge to deliver within 30 minutes, or are a painting contractor who promises to start a job on a Monday at 9:00 AM sharp. Stand by your promises.

What would you promise your customers or prospects?

10. Do you have a value proposition?

Value, not to be mistaken with price, can help define your brand and differentiate you from the competition. What niche do you serve? What do you do well in that niche that makes you different from everyone else? What are the emotional benefits of what you do? The answers to these questions will help define what your value is to your customers – it could be your great customer service, product quality, innovation, or any combination of these.

What is your Value Proposition? Be specific as you can.