

Brand Your Business

Define yourself by what you do, by how you treat others, and how they see you. —George F. Burnsbey

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In service marketing, almost nothing beats a successful brand. Name brands own about 90% of the market. In addition, national brands charge substantially more—up to 40% more— than local or generic brands.

What is Branding?

Branding is the process of creating a singular idea or concept that you “own” inside the mind of your prospect. It is really as simple and as challenging as that.

Branding your Home Care agency should be the most important objective of its marketing strategy. All your marketing efforts really are about creating a brand in the mind of your prospects—thus, marketing is branding. These two concepts are so interconnected that it is impossible to separate them. Because everything that your agency does can contribute to its brand building process, marketing is an element that should not be considered independent from the rest.

Your agency, as I’ve already pointed out, should be in the business of marketing. *Marketing needs to be your agency’s number one objective.* Why? **Because marketing is responsible for building your brand in the mind of your prospects.** Moreover, most services today are bought—not sold—thanks to the power of branding.

That old expression: “Nothing happens until somebody sells something,” has been replaced by today’s expression: *“Nothing happens until somebody brands something.”*

Branding “pre-sells” your service to the user by providing them with a feeling or an association that your service is the “best,” the “cheapest,” the “safest,” etc., and greatly increases the chance of them buying your service. For example, Volvo has branded itself in the mind of its prospects to be the “safest” car on the road. Thus, if a prospect already has in his mind that Volvo is the safest car on the road and he wants to buy a safe car, then the chance of him being “pre-sold” to buy the Volvo over another car is much greater.

The same is true with the Home Care industry. If your agency can create a singular idea in the minds of its prospects, half your marketing work is done. For example, perhaps when your prospects see, hear or think of your agency they immediately think of a singular idea such as Senior Care, Shared Care, Pediatric Care, etc. By “owning” a word or singular idea in your prospect’s mind, you will greatly increase your differentiation over competitors—and this will lead to a higher level of success.

What is a brand name?

A brand name is nothing more than a word or a symbol in the mind of your prospect. It is a warranty or a promise to your prospect that your service will live up to its name. Brands are especially important in the Home Care industry because very few agency services have warranties, and this leaves prospects only with “brands” on which to depend.

A very critical point in Home Care: “A service is a promise, and building a brand builds your promise.”

The power of your brand lies in its ability to influence your prospects. A successful branding program is based on the idea of differentiation. It creates in the mind of your prospect the perception that there is no other service like your service.

Nearly every agency has a brand, an identity, a name and a reputation. Brands provide functionality, images and experiences. Brands serve consumers by saving time, assuring a level of quality and simplifying choice. The brand name—rather than the service—is now the primary reason your prospect will choose another agency over yours. The power of your brand proportionately relates to the amount of profits your agency will receive.

What’s in a name?

The most important branding decision you will ever make is what to name your agency. In the long run, a brand is nothing more than a name. In the short-term, a brand needs a unique idea or concept to survive. It needs to be first in a new category. It needs to stick in your prospect’s mind. Your brand is the essence of your agency. Market share is not based on value, but on the power of the brand in the mind of your prospects. In the long run, a brand is not necessarily a higher-quality product, but a higher quality name.

One of the quickest ways to reach failure is to give your agency a generic name. For example: the generic name American Home Care is actually rather difficult to remember. It is too similar to U.S. Home Care, American Health Services, etc. I suggest that you avoid using a generic name for your agency. The problem with a generic name is its inability to differentiate the brand from the competition. In the home health industry you’ll find agencies with names such as Superior Home Care, Georgia Home Care Services, Home Care Services of Georgia, Home Care Corporation of Georgia, etc. I don’t want to pick on any particular agencies, but will any of these generic brand names break into the mind of prospects and become a major brand? Probably not!

What I recommend that you do is find a regular word taken out of context and use it to connote the primary attribute of your brand. For example, “Partners Home Health” is a great name for a home health care agency because it is easy to remember and is catchy. “Partners Home Health” works as a successful brand name but “Georgia Home Care Services” does not. Home Care agencies are recognized by prospects as being a “Partner” because of the nature of the business, so by taking the word “Partner” out of context and using it to connote the primary attribute of its brand, Partners Home Health was able to create a name that was user friendly, memorable—and *profitable*.

Think simple.

You want your name to be as short and as memorable as possible. Short names greatly improve word-of-mouth “marketing.” However, don’t use a monogram for your name. People do not remember monograms. Monograms have no spirit, no attitude, no message, no promise, no warmth and no humanity—so give your service a name, not a monogram.

Think like a client and your brand will become successful. Your agency should limit its brand. That’s the essence of branding. Your brand has to stand for something both simple and narrow in the mind of your prospect. The limitation is the essential part of the branding process. Limitation combined with consistency is what will build your brand.

Should you ever change your brand name?

I would only recommend changing your brand name if it is weak or non-existent in the mind of your prospects. If you want to change your brand name, first look into the mind of your prospect. Where is your agency? Does your typical prospect bring you to mind when he thinks of Home Care? Perhaps your agency is not in the mind at all. If this is the case, then you can change your brand. But if you already have name recognition and some brand identity, then change your brand at your own risk. I highly recommend not changing.

Stand for something.

A well-known brand that doesn’t stand for anything has no value. A brand that stands for something has value even if the brand is not well known. When your agency stands for something, it at least has the opportunity to create a powerful brand.

The most important aspect of your brand is its single-mindedness. For example—what is Ford? A large, small, cheap, expensive car or truck. This is an example of a burned-out brand that has lost its singularity. Loss of singularity can weaken your brand. If your agency currently provides home care services but is seeking to expand into other service categories such as home cleaning services, food catering services or any other service business that is not part of your primary attribute, I recommend highly that you establish new brand names for these new services and keep them separate from your existing brand.

When your agency can narrow its focus to just one service, i.e. senior care, it becomes a specialist rather than a generalist—and a specialist is perceived to “know more” and provide a higher quality service than a generalist. Don’t confuse your prospects by being all things to all people. This can have a negative affect on your brand.