

How to Stand Out From the Crowd

How do people see you? Do they think of you first? Do they think of you at all? Try to see yourself through the eyes of your buyers, then offer a compelling reason to buy.

by Kathy Wall

What are your points of difference? What distinctly different things do you offer? Are you bigger, better, faster, or provide something that's "can't-get-it-anywhere-else"? **Identifying your "wow" and then communicating it requires strategy and calculated bravery. Success is offering compelling reasons to potential customers so they become not only immediate buyers but longtime loyalists.** Generally speaking, you have to cost less (with at least the same value) and/or offer something they can't get elsewhere.

Merchandising Matters

That's why big companies source proprietary products and use brand names to sell through multiple channels, even if the item is the same. They change it a bit—subtle nuances in trim, hardware, or color—and it becomes "unique" to shoppers.

Example: a "Sofa" in basic brown offered in store A is the exact frame as the "Brambleberry Hill Sofa" in lovely cabbage rose fabric available in store B. Most often, store B gets the sale (and a potentially higher ticket) because they stood out among the competition.

You don't have to reinvent the wheel

when merchandising, sometimes all it takes is to tweak the styling and give it a new name. Use keywords that play well with your company image.

But, hold on, there's a caveat here. Manufacturers who launch "new" products often tout that their new widget is, well, new. Because they are busy working with customers, they often don't see what buyers are seeing, which is that the "new"

widget can be found at lots of other places. More damaging to their credibility is when they boast about a "new" line that has been sold by their competitors for some time. So beware of descriptions and claims that cannot be substantiated.

Differentiating Service

If you are service provider, proving you are unique can be even more challenging. Truthfully saying you're better or faster needs to be qualitative. Unless you have research from a respected source to substantiate a claim, focus instead on things like location and experience.

Can you say you are conveniently located to the city or other popular destinations? After all, time is money and every-

one is in a rush these days. Have you had happy customers for decades? Say so but phrase it so that you sound timeless instead of "old," especially if you are trying to woo younger customers. A good freelance copywriter can help with this positioning. Perhaps you've received prestigious and coveted awards? Be sure you note these distinctions in your marketing materials, social



As a service provider, proving you are unique can be challenging. A strong, distinctive brand is one way to help you stand out from the crowd. Research the competition to ensure you create a totally unique identity in your marketplace. Make the colors, typography, layout, logo, and taglines uniquely you.

media, and websites. Ask to use the icons or logos of the award-givers to make these honors stand out.

Hire a professional photographer and photo stylist at least once a year to capture the best of your work. This is not just to document your work for reference but to showcase it as you rise above your competition. Have the copywriter craft a blurb about each project that highlights what makes that

job unique. Give the designs and projects names that tie back to your company. You created those treatments and/or installed them—no one else can claim that.

The Benefits of Rebranding

We've previously talked about rebranding; this process gives you the perfect opportunity to ensure your company stands out from the crowd. It is certainly the easiest way to control how your brand appears differently.

Research the competition to ensure you create a totally unique identity in your marketplace. Make the colors, typography, layout, logo, and taglines uniquely you. Even the paper used for business cards leaves an impression with customers. We recently upgraded to an extra-thick stock and a design with rounded corners. Every time we hand one to someone we get a pause as they feel the difference.


Easy-peasy steps:

- 1) **Be sure your company is seen as both reputable and fresh in your marketplace.**
- 2) **Keep your merchandising on trend by showing updated, recent photography to illustrate what you do differently than your competition.** Ditch the dated shots no matter how proud you are of that job you did twenty years ago.

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- 3) **Position your product or service using phrases that lead the reader to you.**

- 4) Get the business! ✂



Kathy Wall is president and ringleader of The Media Matters, an agency in the Triad area of North Carolina offering marketing, advertising, and brand strategy to a roster of international clients. Kathy has shared her talents with the home furnishings industry for three decades before forming her own business 16 years ago. Her motto? "We don't work with jerks."

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