

What a Strong Brand Does for a Small Business

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April 17, 2012 Paying attention to your brand is not something only large companies should be doing. Small business owners should also invest in it from the start to accelerate growth and make sustained success more likely.

By “brand,” I don’t mean your logo or a catchy tagline. **Your brand** is the unique bundle of attributes and values that define the product or service you deliver to customers.

That bundle can include tangible attributes like a superior technology or a fun customer experience, as well as intangible **values** like transparency or attention to detail.

Simply put, your brand is the unique way your company does business.

Here is how having a strong brand can be beneficial.

Stand out from the crowd

Because most small businesses don’t have large marketing budgets, they rely on **other ways to attract attention and customers**. A strong brand helps potential **customers notice and remember you**. It clarifies the value you deliver and makes your differentiation more salient.

For example, Barry’s Bootcamp, a 10-unit franchise, has made its brand synonymous with intense workouts and celebrities’ bodies. This brand identity draws attention to the business and distinguishes it from the multitude of bootcamp programs available.

Establish trust with customers

These days, people are less willing to take risks with their purchases. They want to do business with companies that seem established and trustworthy. A strong brand bolsters perceptions of quality and reliability, which gives customers peace of mind. It gives you a reputation that helps you leverage new products or outlets.

The newfound popularity of food trucks attests to this. Many food trucks have crafted compelling brands to offset the “roach coach” stigma. They’ve won over skeptics and built loyal followings.

Focus your efforts

A strong brand can serve as a compass for making the many decisions a small business owner has to make. Branching out into a new technology or adding a new service may make sense when you see it through the lens of short-term **growth**. But when your brand is your decision-making filter, it helps you stay focused on developing a strong and sustainable core offering.

As a sole proprietor, I’m often asked to take on engagements that are outside my expertise. But my focus on my unique core services and speaking topics has helped me establish a specific position in my field of expertise.

Build critical business relationships

Small businesses are not just vying for customers’ attention and affections. You need to build relationships with suppliers and distributors, the media, investors, local government and banks, among others. You have to stand out among the sea of proposals that inundate them and be clear about your value so they want to do business with you.

A strong brand can help you do just that, as the owners of Burger Lounge found. They’ve secured exclusive supplier relationships for the seven-unit, casual **restaurant chain** because they’ve built their brand on a commitment to grass-fed beef and have attracted like-minded vendors.

Attract the right employees

Hiring decisions are among the most important for all business leaders to make. But mistakes with people are particularly detrimental for small businesses that have small staffs and typically tight **cultures**. It can be difficult to get the **right people to join your company**, even with high unemployment rates.

A strong brand helps you attract people who share your values and believe in what you’re trying to do.

Jason Fried, CEO of the software developer 37 Signals, explains it this way. “[Our company is] honest about who we are and what we believe in, because it’s going to turn off certain people and turn on others. And the ones it turns on are going to be really loyal, they’re going to be the ones behind you, who will fight for you.”

If you wait until you’re a big company to invest in your brand, you might never get the chance.

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