

Sales Strategies



by Jared Davis,
MCPF, GCF

The Value of Branding

The value of any product you sell is determined by one thing—what a customer perceives it is worth. This is influenced by several factors, but the most powerful is the value of its brand. When it comes to selling any product, a well-established brand adds significant value. In fact, the most powerful and recognized brands can aspire to prestige and status, allowing the brand owner to charge a premium far beyond what a generic version of the product would realistically be worth.

For example, in the fashion industry, Louis Vuitton is widely accepted as the most valuable luxury brand in the world, with Prada and Gucci also securing top positions.

Your company brand and logo create a consistent image for your marketing

Branding also has the power to transcend a business relationship to a deeply personal connection with consumers. Some brands become so

trusted and loved that consumers will even have tattoos of them, such as Harley-Davidson.

Using Branding in Business

It is common for most businesses to harness the power of the existing brands to enhance the credibility and value of their own product or service. From the basic “Amex Accepted” decal on your front door to the matboard brand logo on your matboard corner caddy, you can establish a higher business value in your customers’ minds by promoting branded products. This strategy can assist with building confidence in the eyes of your customers, especially when branded products provide consumer support information



FrameMakers of Powell in Ohio prominently display its logo in its shop windows and front door.

in the form of brochures or websites, which help educate your customers about their features and advantages.

Branding Psychology

Author Malcolm Gladwell says in his book, *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*, “Buyers make most decisions by relying on their two-second first impressions based on memories, images, and feelings.”

Consumers are bombarded by thousands of different brands on a daily basis, all vying for attention and value. As a result, the most common and instinctive way consumers differentiate and categorize products is by brand. For example, when you think of smartphones, what is the first brand you think of? Apple? When you think of soda, what brand comes to mind first? Coca-Cola? Being able to secure the pole position for heading a product category in the mind of a consumer is valuable real estate. This is called “top of mind,” and a brand needs to possess a high level of recognition to secure this position.

So when your customer thinks of picture fram-



Frames Now in Melbourne, Australia, sells products with inserts of its logo to keep the brand in the consumers sight.

ing, what do you think is the preferred brand that they think of first? No doubt this is where you want your business to be, and that should be your ultimate goal.

David Lantrip, the director of education for Franchise Concepts Inc., which represents popular framing franchise brands including Deck the Walls and The Great Frame Up, says, “Our franchises have seen great benefit from our brand recognition and loyalty. Having stores all over the country, we have often found that customers will seek out one of our stores because of recognition and previous positive experiences. They also know that when they visit one of our stores, they will receive the same level of service and design they are used to.”

Establishing Your Brand

The first thing any business owner needs to acknowledge is that a brand is more than just the sign on the outside of a shop. In the eyes of a consumer, a brand is a combination of several factors, the first and most obvious of which is repetitive reinforcement of your logo. Sean Kogan, vice president of marketing for Hall of Frames in Phoenix, AZ, says, “Our company brand and logo are used as a consistent platform and voice for all our communications and marketing for maximum reinforcement.”

Equally important (and not so obvious) are vital factors such as your appearance, your marketing, your products, your team, and the overall customer experience you offer. All these contribute to your complete business identity. Consumers not only use brands to categorize products and concepts but also their experiences related to that brand. Kogan says, “Consumers need a positive experience to attach to a brand to recall it, not just the brand alone. At Hall of Frames, we want our brand to be the mark of a positive experience.”

It takes more than just time to establish a good brand. There are countless framing businesses that have existed for decades yet still don't have a recognizable brand. Branding

Hall of Frames in Arizona places a removable sticker on the front corner of each frame to help continually reinforce its branding right up until the moment a customer hangs the picture on the wall.



is vital to the actual value of your business in the eyes of a buyer. Even if a business has good sales figures, it can still struggle or fail to sell, simply because it doesn't have a strong brand or visual identity.

Developing Your Own Brand

If a customer were to look around your shop right now, what brands would they identify or recognize, and which of these are actually yours? Keep in mind, if you are going to put effort into promoting a brand within your business, it may be worthwhile to enhance the value of your own brand first.

Branding relates to your business name and logo, which can be reinforced in several ways. The first is to ensure that you visually display your brand and logo prominently and tastefully in as many places as possible. For example, start with signage on your window and your door. Then consider additional signage in-store, such as on your displays and your counter. In fact, it's not hard to identify countless opportunities that can contribute towards establishing more recognition of your brand, such as your uniform, your stationery, and even your coffee mugs! Repetitive reinforcement provides a synergistic effect for consumers where credibility of a brand is more enhanced than just a single occurrence of the brand.

Glenn Vardy, owner of the Frames Now chain in Mel-



Fix-A-Frame in Brisbane, Australia, has established its own sub-branded concept of conservation framing called EndurArt, which helps provide an exclusive point of difference and is promoted through an educational tri-fold brochure.



Sean Kogan, VP of marketing for Hall Of Frames in Phoenix, AZ,, models his corporate uniform, featuring their branded logo.

bourne, Australia, says, “Even though we may not manufacture all our own ready-made photo frames in-house, we go to some extra effort to make sure all of these contain inserts that are clearly branded with our own business logo. Not only does this enhance the value of our brand on each of the products we sell, but it also creates repetitive visual reinforcement of our brand throughout our stores when shoppers see these arranged on our racks and displays.”

Hall of Frames in Arizona is a great example of a framing business that has developed a strong locally recognized brand. Kogan says, “Although we consistently use our brand throughout our marketing, we realized that a picture frame is a unique product that doesn’t provide the opportunity to visually promote the brand after purchase, unlike other common consumer products like electronics and cars. So the best solution we could come up with was to place a removable sticker on the corner of every frame we sell. That way, our brand is continually reinforced with our customers right up until the moment they hang it on their walls and finally remove the sticker.”

Sub-Branding

Your primary business name is not the only brand of value to your business. You could also develop your own sub-brands to identify certain products, processes, or services. For example, rather than using a generic term to describe a process like a “gallery wrap” stretched canvas, you could create an appealing sub-brand name for this process such as “Our Manhattan Box Stretch.” This could provide you with a possible point of difference, especially if you apply a

slightly unique twist to your concept.

David Schummy from Fix-A-Frame in Brisbane, Australia, has created his own sub-branded process called “EndurArt,” which is a great way to market his premium

Top Benefits of Branding

1. Top of Mind – Branding starts with recognition. A well-branded product or concept is the first that comes to mind when a consumer thinks of a given product category.
2. Trust – Branding can be an instant way to establish trust. Consumers are creatures of comfort and by default will prefer to buy something they already know or recognize over something they don’t.
3. Loyalty – Previous positive experiences related to your brand can lead to customer preference and loyalty. Loyal customers are the ultimate goal for any business, especially in this industry.
4. Perception – Branding can improve a customer’s perception of value in a product, which in turn can facilitate higher pricing and increased margins. This can also reduce your vulnerability to cheaper competitors.
5. Education – A brand can be designed to help a consumer understand any unique or different features about a product. For example, the use of the word “conservation” used within a brand can instantly provide extra beneficial information.
6. Value – A brand can help establish a desired level of value and quality in a product. Branding can even be used to convey a level of exclusivity or prestige as well. This can be helpful with price positioning for products such as matboard or glass.
7. Marketing – Not only is it easier to sell a branded product than an unbranded product but you can potentially achieve a higher sale value for a branded product as well.
8. Point of Difference – A brand can be the strongest point of difference between yourself and a competitor with a consumer who would otherwise be comparing on price.
9. Personality – Branding can provide personality to a product. Adjectives “fun,” “individuality,” “youth,” “beauty,” and “love” can all become endearing characteristics of a brand.

conservation method of custom framing with conservation grade materials. By having its own brand defined by the gallery's own specifications, it has the flexibility to be able to use different products that meet the branded concept's criteria while not being permanently tied to someone else's products. The credibility of the "EndurArt" process is reinforced by an in-store display and informative tri-fold brochures to help educate customers about the benefits of this conservation framing solution.

When you focus on developing your own brand, it becomes your proprietary asset, which no one else can use (without your permission) and can provide your business with an exclusive point of difference.

Bottom Line

There is genuine value in branding when it comes to selling. Not only is branding the best way to differentiate your business, but it also establishes your identity in the market. You know you've achieved the ultimate objective for branding when a framing consumer doesn't just say, "Don't you love my new frame?" but instead proudly boasts, "Don't you just love my new [insert your brand here] frame?"

Don't forget, you're not just selling a frame; you're selling your brand. ■

Jared Davis, MCPF, GCF, is an educator at industry tradeshows and conventions who specializes in sales and marketing. Based in Brisbane, Australia, Jared has had 24 years' experience in the framing industry, and has authored numerous articles for major industry publications. He works full-time as a product manager for Megawood Larson-Juhl in Australia and as an international educator and consultant for Gunnar International. He can be reached at jared@jared-davis.com.