

Chapter 3: Branding Yourself

You will need goals, passion, creativity and desire to stand out from other distributors in this industry. Make real money by applying self-promoting strategies that place you in a position of greatness, not mediocrity.

Who's Your Target Audience?

Since there are zero limitations to calling on anyone you choose, make yourself appealing to a diverse audience. The market for imprinted products is vast, so you must be able to position yourself as someone who will be attractive from a business standpoint to anyone you call on. To do so, you have to operate like a chameleon to make the most of your efforts!

What's Your Brand?

To establish a brand, you must create a logo, develop a specific "look" and conduct business in a consistent manner.

As I mentioned earlier, I make myself different by always having a unique business card instead of a paper one, like every other distributor. Over the years, I've employed:

- Wooden cards
- Rubber cards
- Mint boxes
- Credit card flash drives
- Pizza cutters
- Nail files
- Full-color lens-cleaning cloths

I've seen distributors who enjoy fishing, hunting, gardening and pets create their promotional image around those themes, with some even writing and sending newsletters on the subjects in order to create bonds with clients.

It's Not About Money

Some distributors spend large sums of money creating elaborate logos, building websites and renting office space in attempts to separate their promotion efforts from those of industry newbies. A fancy logo or a stocked showroom doesn't mean someone can deliver on what he or she has promised. Just because a distributor can spend a lot doesn't mean his or her brand is complete. The most important pieces to creating a moneymaking promotion business are expertise and professional ability.

When starting out, I had limited ability to design logos and didn't possess resources to create a slick marketing piece, so I decided that my commitment to customers would build my brand. I told everyone that if I didn't return their call by the end of the day, their order would be free. The promise was an excellent talking-point, but it also became a game with customers who tried to make me break my promise. That strengthened my customer relationships. I've never been forced to provide a free order, and have become a distributor who is known to be reliable and trustworthy.

Promote Yourself in Person

I hand-deliver most samples and promotion pieces by visiting on a preset schedule. By planning ahead and organizing your schedule, you can effectively make a large number of deliveries. Do so in conjunction with other calls you are making in a particular part of your territory.

For example, you could dedicate one entire day to dropping off samples of a new product. This increases your chances of bumping into one of your customers in a non-threatening way. You might see him or her in the elevator or at the water fountain. At the very least, the effort gives you the opportunity to locate your prospect's office and to deliver your literature or products personally to the right place.

Where I Started

To establish myself at the beginning of my career, I focused on promoting myself to the apartment industry since I had friends who worked for companies that managed complexes. I convinced one company to let me design a residential referral program that increased their lease renewal percentage considerably. After the program was successful, I was able to sell four additional versions of the original idea. This success separated me from competitors, and I became the go-to person for anyone seeking higher lease renewal figures. Companies I didn't know started calling me. My initial branding efforts built my confidence and made it possible for me to conquer other industry segments one by one.

Tell Them About You

To set yourself apart from others, always include a note when leaving behind material for a prospect or established customers. A business card alone isn't enough. On each occasion, you should write a brief description on who you are, why you are making the visit and how your items fit the prospect's needs. Using imprinted note cards is ideal, but a sticky note or other small piece of paper will work; however, never allow the lack of elaborate promo materials to keep you from leaving a note. What matters is that your message reaches the prospect and they learn something about you.

Sample Note:

My name is Joe Lopez. I left my catalog today for your review. I've never called on your company before, but I wanted to share some ideas that could help your sales department increase orders. Would it be possible to set a time for me to visit? I will follow up with you at the end of the week. Thank you so much for your time!

Sincerely,
Joe

Quality Over Quantity

Using an organized system of deliveries will take more time than mailing to your desired audience. I can't argue with that. Many people will feel that you will achieve better sales results by mailing in mass amounts. They will point out that when mailing 100 pieces of literature, you are effectively covering more ground in less time compared to the time it takes to hand-deliver 25 pieces. That is a four-to-one greater ratio of distribution.

But how do you want your company to be represented? Would you rather be scattershot with your efforts or hit the target? Which approaches do you really feel will yield the highest percentage of results? Try delivering your next round of literature in person and see for yourself. You will not be disappointed!

Be Memorable

Overall, you must make yourself stand out from your competitors for people to remember you. Here is how one distributor set himself apart from the competition:

"My name is Tom Davis, and I want you to know that there is more to promoting yourself than just passing out catalogs! I own a distributorship located in the Midwest. Many of my customers are retail dealers who sell to farmers and ranchers. My selling area is spread out over a wide geographic area. Most of the time I am able to visit each account no more than two times a year. When I began my career, I made a point to meet each one of my prospects personally. And so did my competitors! Many times I had to wait to see prospects because they had one of my competitors in their office. Since I knew that I might not get back to see a particular prospect as frequently as needed, I decided I had to be creative!

"I called a friend of mine who is a professional photographer. I wanted to schedule a sitting so she could take a photo of me. I told her I wanted 500 prints made of the most flattering picture she could take of me! My goal was to leave this photo at each one of my stops. I also planned to mail it with catalogs or samples each time they were requested. I wanted every one of my prospects to have at least one of these photos so they would remember me when I was not in their office. I wanted them to feel that I was making a personal call even when I was not there physically.

"After I started my photo giveaway, it seemed that my phone never stopped ringing. Apparently, I was the first salesperson to leave behind a 4" x 6" glossy photo in addition to promotional products sales materials. The strategy even separated me from salespeople who had pictures on their business cards! The end result was that my customers and prospects felt like they knew me because my photo hung around their office. The next year's photo included my wife and kids. Now my prospects and customers feel like they're part of our family!"

Always make the marketing portion of your efforts one of your most important daily activities. The combination of great service and creative marketing efforts make it possible for you to achieve success in this industry.



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TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE MONEY SAVING OFFERS!

\$40 REBATE COUPON

- * Offer good on an order of \$500.00 or more (product & tooling only).
- * Limit one offer per sales person, per order.
- * Not to be combined w/any other offer or quote.
- * Coupon must be attached to order.
- * Offer expires 12/31/20.
- * Use code: DS-2020-40

FREE DIE COUPON

- * Free Die up to \$80.00 net value.
- * Minimum 2nd column qty.
- * Limit one offer per sales person, per order.
- * Not to be combined w/any other offer or quote.
- * Coupon must be attached to order.
- * Offer expires 12/31/20.
- * Use code: DS-2020-FD