

BRAND IN MARKETING

What is in a brand name? Everything! Think of these brands: Coke, Barbie, McDonalds, Madonna, Pepsi, Microsoft, Xerox and Steven Spielberg. Did you notice that brands can be things, replicas of people and actual people? Brands are the public perception of a thing or person. Companies work very hard to establish their brand.

The people and companies behind the above brand names are well known. They have earned the right to be positioned where they are in the public eye. Are you or your product clearly associated with the solution you seek to provide? As an entrepreneur, you have to be ever so keenly aware of every minute detail and opportunity to brand yourself. You need to be the expert. Your product must solve the problem, and the world needs to know about it. Branding, therefore, may be the most important marketing challenge.

It is all about public perception. Is Coke the real thing? Does McDonald's offer the best food, most delicious hamburger? We have been trained by skilled marketers to make the above associations. We have been conditioned over time to accept the advertising as real, whether we actually believe it or not. Very clever indeed, these markers have been. You cannot afford to be any less convincing in your efforts.

As an entrepreneur, you will most likely not have the extensive resources that a major company or big name star has. You probably are the marketing department, the advertising department, the sales team, the accountant and so on. As such, you must remain acutely aware of your image, the perception of each and every customer, the marketplace as a whole. Your position in the marketplace, often dictated by the perceived quality of your products, your celebrity, your reputation for service, your leadership in your field will have a great deal to do with the effectiveness of your brand. You are the brand.

Your company must be credible. Your products and services must do what you say. You must also be credible personally. If you cannot be rightfully associated with your product or service offering, it will be difficult for the public to be receptive to such a contradiction. Honesty and integrity will be assets of great

value to you as your marketplace gets to know you.