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WHITE PAPER

PROFESSIONAL GRAPHIC DESIGN: The Crucial Step Toward Higher Brand Equity, Increased Revenues

The term “brand” is tossed around quite liberally in the business media. But how, exactly, is this term defined? A brand is how the world perceives your company’s products or services. The Weight Watchers® brand, for example, is synonymous with weight loss. The company has been able to leverage this brand for product extensions such as cookbooks, scales, magazines, and food products because of the perception of their brand. The perception of a brand is an intangible asset. However, a brand directly influences a tangible asset—a company’s financial performance. Whether you are a published author, Fortune 500 company, or small business startup, you communicate a brand to the outside world. Establishing this brand and how your product or service differentiates from your competitors is the first step in building brand equity and increasing revenues. Communicating this brand visually through professional graphic design is the often-missed, but crucial, second step, and the focus of this White Paper.

CREATE INITIAL, POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS

A brand is expressed visually through your company’s logo, web site, letterhead, business cards, and other marketing materials. All of these visuals communicate your brand and, consequently, strongly influence the perception of that brand. People form lasting impressions about a company’s size, financial condition, product reliability, service quality, value, and more based on their initial contact with your company, whether it be a glance at your business card or a visit to your web site. Does your brand communicate a reliable

STEP 1
Establish your brand by differentiating yourself from your competitors

STEP 2
Communicate the brand visually through professional graphic design

company offering high-quality products or services? Or an incompetent and unprofessional startup that is unwilling to invest in the services of a professional graphic designer?

Strong, consistent images help build what is referred to as “brand equity,” or the value associated with your brand. A company needs to build brand equity from the start by creating positive associations with their target customers. First impressions can be made in a matter of seconds. Once this impression is established in a customer’s mind, it is hard to reverse. So it is important to remember that a negative association is extremely hard or even impossible to undo. It is imperative, then, that startups and emerging businesses build brand equity by creating initial, positive first impressions with their brand through professional graphic design. This will help build the foundation that leads to success.

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CASE STUDY: EDUCATIONAL ENDEAVORS

The following is an example of how Educational Endeavors, a small educational services company, revised their poorly designed brand and significantly increased revenues. This illustrates the crucial role that professional graphic design plays in establishing brand equity.

educational
ENDEAVORS™
Enriching one mind at a time

Business Needs

Educational Endeavors, a Chicago-based company founded in 2001, provides academic tutoring and homeschooling services to K–12 students in the Chicagoland area. The company’s goals were to increase revenues and broaden their services. Founder Eric Davis knew that his company had an excellent business model, but his marketing collateral didn’t communicate

this. Davis found himself apologizing for the brochures as he handed them out. “We looked like a homegrown business,” he admits. “Our web site was junk, and we didn’t have any decent print collateral. Everything looked very unprofessional.”

Solutions

Educational Endeavors turned to Visible Logic, a professional graphic design firm, to help them communicate a more professional image. Being a volume business, Educational Endeavors’ goal was to increase revenues by increasing the number of clients. “We offered excellent services. We just didn’t have the proper perception of our services,” says Davis. Before designing the right image for Educational

Endeavors, Visible Logic provided a preliminary branding consultation—an important step often missed when determining an overall design. This helped reveal Educational Endeavors’ business goals and overall mission. Educational Endeavors was struggling—and continues to struggle—with differentiation, but Visible Logic helped them with this challenge. After the initial consultation, designers provided logo samples, images to consider for the web site, and other visuals to help identify the right image for Educational Endeavors. “We went with a clean, clear brand that relied on name, not image, recognition. We weren’t able to nail this down until Visible Logic came into the picture,” says Davis.

Visible Logic then revised Educational Endeavors’ logo, incorporated a tag line (“something we had never done before,” says Davis), and completely redesigned their web site. Visible Logic also designed print brochures, folders, registration forms, and electronic newsletters for the educational services company. Consistent use of imagery is key in establishing a brand. In Educational Endeavors’ case, consistent images and color schemes were used across all media, resulting in a brand that communicated a much more professional image.

Within six months of launching their new brand, Educational Endeavors’ business jumped dramatically.

Results

Before they defined and revised their brand, Educational Endeavors had 15 academic tutoring clients and no institutional clients. Within six months of launching their new brand, Educational Endeavors’ business jumped dramatically. The number of academic tutoring clients increased to 25, and they acquired more than 10 institutional clients seeking consulting services. The company started acquiring institutional clients *because* of their new, professional image. Business has since doubled.

Today, Educational Endeavors’ consulting services for institutional clients has not only increased in volume, it has increased significantly in quality. This revenue stream, which once brought in only 10 percent of Educational Endeavors’ business prior to the redesign, represented 30 percent of total

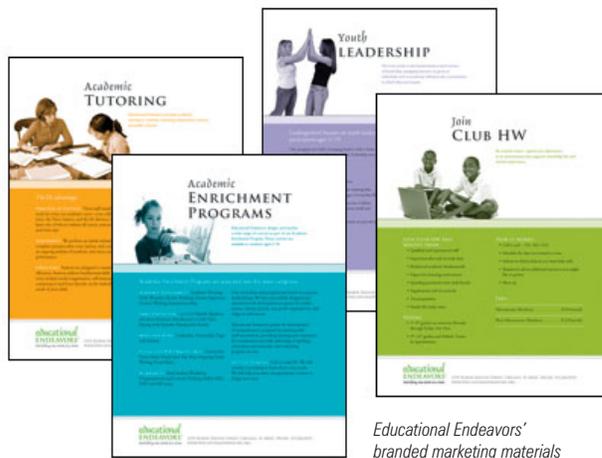


Old Web Site (top),
Redesigned Web Site (bottom)



revenues for the 2008–09 school year (tutoring, test prep, literacy workshops, and enrichment programs represented the other 70 percent). The company now provides services to over 100 academic tutoring clients over the course of the school year. “I think people miss the boat when it

comes to branding. That’s what we learned when working with Visible Logic,” reveals Davis. “Another challenge was the cliché: we had to spend money to make money.”



*Educational Endeavors’
branded marketing materials*

Startups and growing businesses should take a page from the lessons learned by Educational Endeavors: defining your brand is the first step in building brand equity with your customers. But unless you take the second, crucial step—communicating this brand with professional, consistent graphic design across all media—your efforts

at defining your brand will be wasted. As Educational Endeavors has now learned, investing in a professional image that successfully communicates your company’s brand is an ongoing part of doing business, and one that results in dramatic growth and increased revenues.

It is imperative that startups and emerging businesses build brand equity through professional graphic design.

ABOUT VISIBLE LOGIC

Established in 2001, Visible Logic, Inc. works on a breadth of services, from web sites to logos to books and printed materials to build cohesive and consistent identities for their clients. Based in Portland, Maine, Visible Logic builds branding systems and works on the design of individual projects for clients across the U.S. Visible Logic serves small businesses, not-for-profits, entrepreneurs, and publishers who want to use high-quality design to compete with companies of all sizes.

For more information on Visible Logic’s services, go to www.visiblelogic.com or contact Emily Brackett at (207) 761-4230 or ebrackett@visiblelogic.com.