

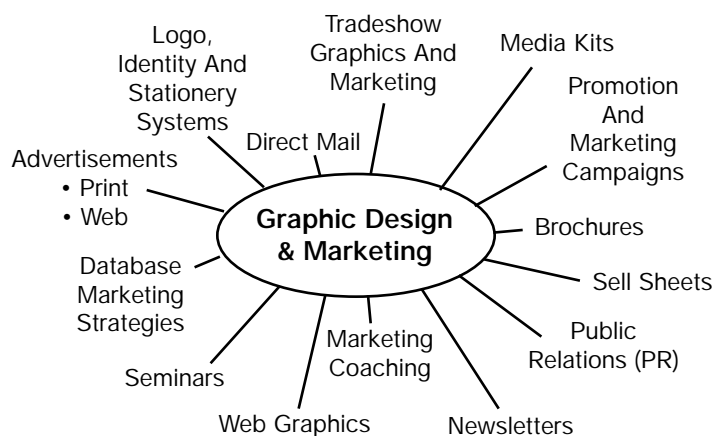
Focus Your Way To Success[®]

by Kathy Ellis, Business Lab Marketing Coach

What do your customers *really* buy from you? Quite simply, this one question is what your business is all about. Once you have answered this question and are able to focus your entire company around it, you will see sales increase, employee morale improve and it will all seem fairly effortless. In this article, we will help you identify your focus and provide some tips on how to implement a focus strategy.

So...What Are They Really Buying? Begin by putting yourself in the shoes of your customers. Go beyond the actual product or service that you hand them and dig into their psyche to determine what they really buy. You can start by reviewing some examples: FedEx's customers buy "overnight;" Volvo customers buy "safety;" Gallery Furniture customers buy "savings;" Starbucks' customers buy "experience/ambiance;" and, The Business Lab's customers buy "image and messages/ideas."

Tip From The Business Lab: Use a mindmapping technique by placing your product/service in the middle of the circle and draw spokes around the outside of the circle. On the spokes, place all the "features" of your product or service. For The Business Lab, our map looks like this:



Now ask yourself, why do my customers need these things? For us, our clients come to The Business Lab because they need to create/enhance/change their image and they have a message they need to send to their customers and... we help them do this.

From this mindmap, as a team, you should be able to come up with a word or phrase that describes what your customers are really buying from you and your company. Be certain to keep your focus on what the customer believes and not what you want to believe about your product/service.

Developing Your Focus Into A Brand: This is where the real success for your company will come. The topic of branding is huge and branding strategies cannot be universally applied. However, once you begin to think of your new focus as a brand, you will begin to see how the branding process occurs. Your brand is exactly what your customers think they are buying from you. If you've done a good job of identifying your focus, then branding becomes nothing more than a process of consistently and continuously marketing this single concept (your brand).

Tip From The Business Lab: Narrow is better than wide, few words are better than several and your credentials are crucial. Understand that you cannot brand every attribute of your product or service. Try to reduce the essence of what your customers buy from you into a single thought — one that your competitors aren't using or are known for. What are your credentials? Is your company the largest? The best selling? The most experienced? The oldest/most established? The busiest? The fastest? In addition, pick the credentials that distinguish you from your competitor and use them in all of your marketing/branding.

Putting Your Focus/Brand Into Action: Once you have developed the focus/brand for your company, everything you do should be consistent with this focus. Your sales presentation, your marketing materials, your public relations plan...all of these should convey your focus/brand.

Tip From The Business Lab: Take a look at your look. Even things like the colors of your logo can impact the success of your branding. Be certain your look matches your message. Be consistent and be different.

More Information? If you would like to learn more about this important topic, please send an E-mail to ideas@thebusinesslab.com or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-517-0789.

Author's Note: Kathy Ellis is a Marketing Coach and the owner of The Business Lab, a full service marketing and graphic design company. We specialize in relationship marketing programs including database marketing, company brochures, client newsletters and promotional marketing materials for our clients. We share with you our FREE newsletter to showcase powerful marketing tips, techniques and ideas to help you improve your business. The Business Lab is based in Houston, TX at 281-517-0998 or by E-mail at kathy@thebusinesslab.com