

The Details[®]

By Kathy Ellis, The Business Lab Marketing Coach

My grandfather always use to say — “if you don’t have time to do it right, when are you going to have time to do it over?” In most companies the “do-overs” can generally be traced back to the details. We skipped a step, didn’t pay attention, went too fast, etc. Somewhere along the way, we missed one or several of the details, and we end up either doing it over on our nickel, or worse, losing or not getting the business at all.

Professionals fully understand that keeping up with all the details is extremely challenging, but typically, only a few key details will make or break your business. Naturally, those are the details that should receive the most attention. Across the board, regardless of industry, two details that warrant further consideration are the information a company presents to clients, and the consistency of the company’s presentation of that information.

In our design business, the most important detail is the information our clients are trying to convey to their audience. The sole purpose of design is to improve the performance of our client’s information. We do this with images, the way the headline is placed, the papers we choose, the fonts and colors, the functionality on a website, the tie-in with other promotions, the size, and so on.

Consistency is another key detail important to all companies. Being consistent with your message and your identity will improve your business. We can practically guarantee this outcome as long as your message and your identity are consistent with one another and consistent with who your company really is — i.e., walking your talk, so to speak. Consistent presentation of your corporate materials projects a unified, strong message to clients and prospects that your company has its act together, pays attention to the little details, and is ready to attack that client’s problems with the same dedication to quality reflected in your collateral materials.

The following is a real-life example of how a missed detail can affect the entire outcome of a marketing attempt. We’ve changed the name of the company involved, but this type of situation is rather common.

I received this envelope in the mail. Being in the design business, I pretty much check out *all* the mail just to see what’s working and what isn’t. Inside this envelope was a very professional trifold brochure and a typewritten letter on attractive letterhead. Nice, but unfortunately the envelope was completely at odds from the well designed package inside. The envelope was a tragic comedy of errors. First of all, it was a *used* envelope! The return address was handwritten on a not-quite-opaque white label, applied at a slight angle over another company’s preprinted logo. Our address was written by another person, also at an angle. Then the envelope was fed through the postage meter at yet another angle.

The real challenge for this company is that by not paying attention to this last, little, seemingly insignificant detail—the envelope—

they made a sloppy first impression and created a whole host of obstacles to overcome at the onset of a potential business relationship. When you send information about your company to another person or group, you are also communicating what it will be like to do business with you—this information and these materials are an expression of your mission, strategy, objectives, and culture. It also will determine who you attract as your customers (and employees).



Tip From The Business Lab: Perform an internal consistency audit by gathering your team and your collateral materials. Spread your print materials across your conference table and see how you feel about the consistency of the look and feel, as well as the messages. Ask yourself these questions: Does every piece have a similar tag line describing your company? Are the colors consistent? Is your logo used in a similar fashion each time? Does the feel of your print materials match your company’s personality? Next, review the last 12 months of your marketing efforts to get an idea of how consistent your delivery is. Think “top of mind awareness” such as frequency in sending information (postcards, newsletters, articles, offers, direct mail). Are your marketing campaigns haphazard or do you have a plan to remind clients/prospect about your company on a consistent basis? Along with your team, find out what information is important to your clients/prospects and set up a plan that allows you to deliver this information in a consistent manner.

More Information? If you would like to learn more about this important topic or would like to receive our FREE Service Ideas Booklet, please send an E-mail to kathy@thebusinesslab.com, visit our website at www.thebusinesslab.com, or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-374-0569.

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 creativity and helping you think outside the box. We then help you implement those creative ideas through programs including database marketing, websites, interactive CD brochures, company brochures, client newsletters and promotional marketing materials. We share our FREE newsletter with you to showcase powerful marketing tips, techniques, and ideas to help you improve your business. The Business Lab is based in Houston, TX, at 281-374-0170 or by E-mail at kathy@thebusinesslab.com