Guide to Marketing Your Business

How to Develop and Use Your Company's Brand to Build Your Business

Mechanical Contractors Association of America, Inc.

1385 Piccard Drive

Rockville, MD 20850-4340

Introduction

The complexity of today's marketplace makes it more challenging than ever before to conduct business. Rules, regulations and technologies are constantly changing along with the boundaries within which companies conduct their business. Nowhere are these constant changes more apparent than in the field of marketing; that is, helping companies create and publicize their "brand"—their name, their reputation and the quality of the services and/or products they offer.

To compete successfully in today's marketplace, mechanical construction, mechanical service and plumbing contractors need to market their businesses and the products and services they offer to existing and potential customers. To be effective in those efforts, they need to know the basics about planning, developing and using a marketing program. Professional agencies are available to help businesses develop the components of a marketing program, but business owners should be prepared with some ideas about the desired results before sitting down with a professional. MCAA's *Guide to Marketing Your Business* is designed to help you conceive those ideas and assemble them into a successful plan that will help your business grow and thrive.

MCAA's Management Methods Committee published this guide, but its contents were developed by Kristina Konen of Cut & Paste Design, a marketing consultant based in Arizona. The format is designed to be user-friendly and customizable.

For more information, please contact Ann Mattheis (amattheis@mcaa.org) or call 800-556-3653.

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Corporate Identity

What Is Corporate Identity?

BusinessDictonary.com defines corporate identity as:

"A combination of color schemes, designs, words, etc., that a firm employs to make a visual statement about itself and to communicate its business philosophy. It is an enduring symbol of how a firm views itself, how it wishes to be viewed by others, and how others recognize and remember it. Unlike corporate image (which is 'in there,' a changeable mental impression), corporate identity is 'out there,' a sensory-experience conveyed by things such as buildings, décor, logo, name, slogan, stationery and uniforms, and is largely unaffected by the company's financial performance and ups and downs in its fortunes. Corporate-identity is either strong or weak (not positive, negative, or neutral like a corporate image) and is more or less permanent unless changed deliberately. "

Corporate identity can be one of a company's greatest assets. A successful corporate identity creates a distinctive image among existing and prospective customers, partners, and market influencers. It speaks of heritage, uniqueness, meaning, and purpose.   Apple Computer's identity (conveyed by its name and its multicolored bitten-off-apple logo), for example, has survived almost intact for over 30 years, defining the company as an innovative and trail-blazing firm

Properly implemented, a company's corporate identity has a cumulative effect; it magnifies the company's mission, creates awareness, and broadens perception. Consistent and correct use of corporate identity is paramount to a company's effort to create and maintain a strong brand.

The four main components of an identity are:

- Corporate signature;
- Product brands;
- Type; and
- Color.

Together, they visually communicate and distinguish a company from all others.

Corporate Signature

The corporate signature, otherwise known as its **logo** (a symbol) and **logotype** (the symbol and the company name), represents a company's name or trademark and is distinctive for easy recognition. It is the most visible and recognizable element of a company's corporate identity. It is an instrument of pride, and should always be shown at its best. The Apple Computer Company's logo is an excellent example of a well-conceived and presented corporate signature.

When used in accordance with corporate identity guidelines, the signature links a company's products and service offerings. It is a combination of the company's name and identifying symbol; *neither should ever be altered to ensure the company's image is protected and remains strong*. Below is another example of a corporate signature.

MCAA's logo

Product Sub-Brands

Product sub-brands are visual identifiers of the different product lines offered by a company. For example, General Motors makes motor vehicles—cars and trucks—but each of those vehicles is offered in a product line—GMC, Chevrolet, Cadillac and Buick. To convey the unique features of each of these product lines and yet maintain consistency in their look, applications of the brand names are all similar in type style, with each carrying a customized symbol depicting its unique technology. Sub-brands are used on the products themselves, in printed materials, presentation materials and advertisements. Applications where sub-brands are not used include stationery, signage, vehicles, and other "high-level" corporate materials. The product brands should always be accompanied by a company's logo or logotype.

Communication Guidelines

Consistency in communicating a company's brand in the marketplace is key to the success of a marketing strategy and building a strong brand. The following guidelines should be adhered to when promoting a company's products and services.

Corporate Brand

A company's name and logo should be used whenever referring to a company or when marketing that company's capabilities. The company's logo should never be altered, unless it is being freshened with a redesign.

Corporate Color Palette

The colors used to identify a company are integral to its corporate identity. A corporate color palette typically includes two types of colors: primary and secondary. The primary colors are those used in the company's logo. Secondary colors are those used in printed materials, presentation materials, other promotional applications, company websites, or intranet sites. As with a logo, once a company's colors are established, they must not be altered or substituted, but complementary colors may be added. Remember…consistency is key to building a strong brand.

Typography

Typography, or the use of typefaces to communicate ideas or images, is another important part of the corporate identity. When used consistently and accurately, typography creates a distinctive look throughout a company's marketing materials. Properly applied, typography can effectively build a unique image and strong brand recognition in the marketplace. Choose a type typeface that is easy to

read and be sure the chosen typeface is available to all employees, especially those who regularly produce or update company documents and publications.

E-mail Signature

The use of a proper e-mail signature is very important to maintain a professional image representative of your company. Non-professional details, such as colored backgrounds, clip art and comical typefaces should not be used. Make sure that everyone that represents your company in e-mail is using the same template for brand consistency.

Printed Communications

Although modern technology has greatly expanded the variety of ways in which companies may market their products and/or services, printed materials are still essential for conveying an organization's trade and corporate identity. Their design is a direct reflection of the integrity of the business they symbolize and their impact and effect are largely dependent on the consistency of their design and printing.

Business Cards

Few elements of a corporate identity have as much impact as business cards. Although small, they can leave a big impression with customers, business partners, vendors and other associates. Their design should be carefully considered and every attempt should be made to ensure that the specifications are followed once established. The following suggestions should be considered when developing your company's business card design:

Keep It Simple

Business cards are a form of introduction. They present the company and the person who represents the company. Their design, therefore, should include basic information— the company logo or logotype and the business card holder's name, title and contact information—in a simple, easy-to-read layout (see the sample to the right). If certifications or product information are essential for customers, place them on the back of the business card.

Be Consistent

Use the typography and corporate color palette that have been established to build the company's brand.

Stationery

Stationery is used for internal and external correspondence of all kinds and comes in variety of formats such as envelopes, mailing labels, memorandums, facsimile cover sheets, thank-you cards, pocket cards, and holiday cards, to name a few. Following the design specifications established for stationery is essential to protect and promote the company's brand. Notice the consistency in design used in the stationary samples provided.

Promotional Print Materials

Print collateral refers to the family of materials designed to promote a company's products and services. Brochures and fliers about the company, its products and services, or new offerings provide an excellent opportunity to communicate a strong, distinct and consistent identity for the company. Standardizing the design, production and printing of these materials reinforces brand messaging and enhances communication to the marketplace.

Print collateral also bridges complementary products and services. For example, if a mechanical contractor offers mechanical construction and mechanical services, the brochures and fliers advertising these offerings could use the same graphics, layout and color palette, but different color paper. Through an integrated presentation, individual products and services make a collective impact and link offerings into a complete package. Below are examples of printed collateral materials advertising MCAA's products and services.
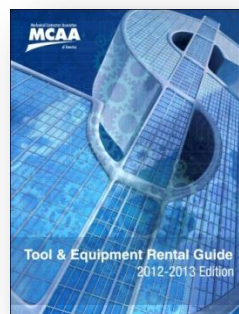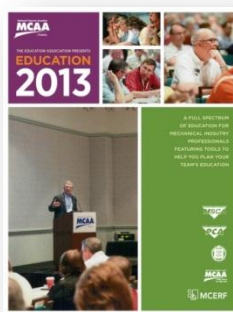
Presentations and Project Proposals

Presentations and business proposals provide valuable opportunities for companies to effectively convey marketing messages by combining visual elements with live dialogue. While the quality and effectiveness of the presenter's performance is key to the success of a presentation, well-considered and designed visual effects can help capture and keep the audience's attention. Likewise, a well-composed and organized proposal that frames the content in a pleasing, attractive format can have a significant impact on the intended audience. Both present opportunities to reinforce brand messaging.

Presentations with Punch

Presentations provide a way for company representatives to speak directly to an audience using a variety of visual aids, such as printed graphics, overheads, slides and/or computer-generated presentations. Most office word processing software packages offer templates for each type of visual aid, allowing users broad flexibility in designing formats for incorporating their companies' brand elements. Some suggestions to guide your design of presentation aids follow.

Design for the Audience in the Back of the Room

Whatever format you choose for your visual aids, be sure the typeface is clean and large enough so that all audience members can read the message or information easily and quickly.

The 4 X 4 Rule

When composing a message or information for your visual aid, be brief. Refrain from cramming complicated messages on each slide, page or overhead. Your audience will focus on reading that information rather than listening to you. Your visual aids should guide you and your audience through your presentation, organizing the information into a logical sequence of ideas or actions that you want them to take. **Keep the information on each slide to four lines with four words each**. Your presentation will have a more profound impact if you follow that rule.

Showcase Your Company's Brand

Formal presentations offer another opportunity to highlight and promote your company's brand. At a minimum, use the logo and/or logotype in the visuals at the beginning and at the end of your presentation. Check for grammar and spelling errors before you finalize the presentation and the visuals. Your company's reputation for delivering quality products and/or services is reflected in the quality of the presentation.

Winning Proposals

Preparing and presenting project bid proposals is a major part of the contracting business. The bid package, which contains the written proposal, the estimate, the schedule and other accompanying documents, may be your company's first introduction to the soliciting company. The old adage, "you only get one chance to make a great first impression," applies here. And, every proposal you submit to that client thereafter should be prepared as if it were the first. The quality of the proposal says everything about the quality of the work your company performs. It shows in the attention to detail and organization and presentation of the information.

Software templates are available to help you plan and organize your proposal. Typically, the contents should include:

- Table of Contents (for longer proposals)
- Executive Summary
- Project Management Plan
- Project Staff Resumes
- Corporate Qualifications (including financial information)
- Technical Proposal (including schedule, estimate, bid summary)
- Appendices

Some suggestions to consider as you prepare your proposal:

Read the Request for Proposal (RFP) Carefully
Make sure you and your proposal team understand what the RFP requires. If you miss an important requirement, you won't get a second chance to provide it.

Check for Mathematical Errors
Make sure the numbers add correctly and that all numbers throughout the proposal agree. The bid number in the back of the proposal should be the same as the bid number in the Executive Summary. The same goes for labor, equipment and materials numbers quoted in different sections.

Check for Spelling and Grammar Errors
Although your company is not being considered for a project because of your writing ability, your attention to those details in your proposal reflects how well you will pay attention to project details on the job. Ask a person who has not been involved in the proposal to read through it for those errors.

Highlight What You Want To Sell
A project proposal is an opportunity for you to sell your company's products and services, high quality performance, and consistent delivery of projects that are on time and within budget. Highlight the points you want the evaluators to see by bolding, italicizing or underlining key phrases or sentences. Be sure to capture those key selling points in your Executive Summary.

Advertising, Promotions and Public Relations
Companies that seek to increase their business opportunities advertise their products and services and promote themselves. Advertising and promotion options are many and varied and generally fall into two categories—print and electronic media (radio, television, and the Internet). Advertising costs vary widely, depending largely on the use of color, paper weight and circulation in the case of printed publications or the audience size in the case of electronic media.

As you plan your advertising campaign, keep your message and your ad design consistent to ensure that existing and potential customers recognize your company and the services and products that you provide. Always remember to include your contact information. And, make sure that advertising items

include your company's license information (especially if your state and/or local government requires that information).

Printed Advertisements

Fliers and Brochures

Fliers are designed for a quick read—one to two pages or one page folded—and a wide distribution. The larger the quantity ordered, the lower the cost. You may consider including a flier with each customer invoice or designing a targeted mailing to announce a new product or service.

Brochures or pamphlets provide more detailed, extensive information about a product, service or the company promoting them. They may be two or more pages; lengthier brochures are "saddle-stitched" or stapled along the spine. Plan to use brochures as handouts to customers or potential customers or as a self-mailing piece to a targeted audience.

Signs

Businesses are finding ways to use signs for more than just to identify their office building. Company vehicles, project sites, exhibits and much more are appropriate and useful applications for signs. The size, type and use of color all figure into the cost, which varies greatly. Once again, keep in mind that signs need to be consistent with your other promotion/advertising designs and themes, particularly with regard to the use of your company's logo and logotype and corporate colors.

Promotional Items

Promotional items or handouts are a perfect way to extend your brand identity, especially when items will be used again and again and provide a continuing reminder of your company and the products and/or services it provides. Depending on your budget, choose from pens, pencils, key chains, baseball hats, pen lights, umbrellas, T-shirts, golf shirts and jackets. Apparel is especially appropriate for sales staff members who regularly meet with clients and potential customers. Encourage employees to wear shirts, hats and jackets during social events that include clients and customers.

Trade Show Exhibits

Trade shows provide companies with another way to advertise and promote their products and services. Company representatives may interact directly with their existing and potential customers, demonstrate new and current products, network, conduct impromptu meetings and negotiate deals. There are downsides as well, the most significant of which is cost. Booth space rental fees, shipping and maintaining a booth and travel expenses for company representatives add up quickly. However, if a trade show draws a large number of representatives for a company's market, then the costs are justified.

Once you decide to participate in a trade show, you will need to either rent or purchase a booth to help you promote your company and its products and services. Renting is a good option if you decide to try out the experience or just exhibit once or twice. Check out exhibit rental services in the local area where the trade show is located to minimize shipping costs and simplify the set-up and tear-down logistics

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(rental services will set up and take down your booth structure). Purchase is a better idea and investment if you decide to exhibit around the country several times each year. There are a variety of booth types and designs—from simple tabletops and inline to more elaborate structures such as islands (see below)—each according to how you wish your company to be displayed and presented to the buying public and the size of your budget. Whichever type of booth you choose, the design should be simple and uncluttered serving as a backdrop for your company and its offerings, rather than a distraction.
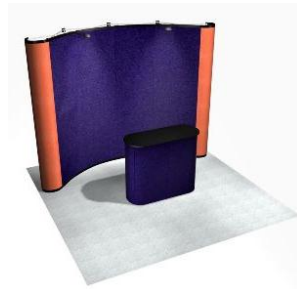
Tabletop   *10' x 10' Inline*   *Island*

Some suggestions to consider:

Consistent Branding

Consistent use of your company's corporate identity allows your customers to easily identify your products, services and communications materials. Your trade show booth should display your company's colors as closely as possible and the graphics should complement other communications materials. Although graphics may vary in style from year to year, a company's typographical standards should always be applied and a similar approach to the design should be carried out at all shows throughout the year.

Keep Your Booth Open, Inviting, and Organized

This rule goes for the booth backdrop as well as the overall space. Visitors react to displays in seconds—the more confusing and complex the message, the less effective it is as a communications device. The design should showcase your corporate logo, logotype and slogan, as appropriate. Do not bury your company's identity with overwhelming displays of photos and product/service information. Let your sales staff, brochures and fliers do the majority of the selling. Make visitors feel welcome and comfortable while at your booth by limiting the number of literature racks, handouts and demo tables Organize your space so that display amenities are out of the way, allowing visitors/customers easy access. Bottom line—keep it simple!

Videos

Companies often use videos in their displays to demonstrate products and services and/or provide information about their history, future plans and other information. Keep in mind that videos require the viewer's undivided attention to achieve the desired effect. Yet, trade show visitors typically stroll from booth to booth, stopping to meet and speak with company representatives, and are easily

distracted by the many goings-on at the show. Consequently, a video may not be your most effective—or cost-effective— marketing tool at a trade show. Videos are far more effective in a live presentation with a captive audience or as a website amenity.

If your company considers a video necessary to demonstrate a product or service, keep it very brief—less than a minute—and run it only for interested customers.

Booth Logistics

There is a practical side to booth planning and management. If storage space for the booth is limited and you wish to keep shipping costs down, choose a lightweight option. Again, a wide variety of styles are available that allow easy, quick set-up and tear-down and compact shipping and storage.

Once you have conceived a general booth design and chosen a display type, look for a company to construct the display. A quick search on the Internet or in your local Yellow Pages will list several good national companies and possibly local vendors for exhibit displays. Take some time to compare prices and services before you make a commitment.

Public Relations

News/Press Releases

News/press releases are an excellent way to publicize your company's accomplishments, new products, services or other newsworthy developments. Keep the content concise, factual and professional. News editors are besieged with items every day, so it's important to capture their attention quickly with the basics of the news item up front. Begin the release with the basics—who, what, where, when and sometimes why—and then follow up with background information and quotes from the company principal and/or key people involved with the issue. Always include your contact information. An "Embargo" notation, which tells the press not to release the news until the date of intended release, may also be appropriate in some situations.

Be patient! Not all releases are published, and when they are, expect only a line or two about the issue.

Develop a list of reliable press contacts. General newspapers or periodicals may have business sections with reporters who specialize in certain business markets (this will vary widely by market size). Trade journals in particular often assign one or two reporters to a particular industry or subject area that may include your company's business. Begin by determining which publications you would like to target, then check their websites for submission guidelines and reporter contact information. It is best to follow the submission guidelines, saving calls and or e-mails for follow-up. And, when a reporter calls you, be mindful that they may be on a tight deadline. Work with them, and they will be more willing to pick up your releases and publish your company's name.

Multiple press release agencies are available online and some offer free services. They offer a fast, easy way to disseminate your press releases. Journalists, bloggers and other news organizations will often pick up releases from these sites, thereby extending your reach at little or no cost. Some of the most well-known sites include:

PRNewsire.com – requires a yearly membership fee in addition to per-release charges; reaches a wide variety of print and online publications

prweb.com – pricing is per release and varies depending on the plan you select

pitchengine.com – allows you to post one release per month for free; multiple releases require a subscription fee

prlog.org – free to post multiple releases; also offers a free page dedicated to your company

newsiretoday.com – a free for basic inclusion; additional "premium inclusion" fees apply if you want to include your company's logo, images, etc.

Newsletters

A company newsletter has a single focus—your company. Articles may include employee profiles, recent company accomplishments, changes in products or services, and much more. A typical company newsletter is between one to eight pages. The news may be organized into departments or sections to help the reader find articles of interest.

Some companies publish a newsletter solely for their employees. Companies that publish for an external audience as well will find a useful vehicle for promotions and publicity. Keeping a company's clientele informed about developments in product lines and services and/or changes in staffing ensures the company's name and logo/logotype are seen repeatedly and in a positive light.

Before committing to this strategy, check the pricing on printing and mailing the newsletter. If costs are an issue, consider sending your newsletter electronically. This strategy will save time (for you and your customers) and eliminate printing and mailing expenses.

World Wide Web and Multimedia

Modern communications offer businesses a wide variety of marketing options beyond print media. Radio, television and the Internet bring an exciting menu of marketing and promotion options. Radio and television can deliver advertising messages with a personal, even dramatic touch while the Internet carries messages across town and around the world. Depending on your audience and the size of your budget, multimedia may provide some attractive marketing avenues. As you plan your media advertising campaign, remember to remain consistent with your corporate logo and logotype and your company's color palette.

Radio

Radio advertising relies on the voices of trained announcers to deliver your message. Ad rates depend on the audience size for a program; ad rates for rush hour news shows are much higher than for late-night talk shows, for example. Ad lengths are brief—10 seconds,

20 seconds, 30 seconds, one minute—which also factors into the price. The number of times that an ad runs (once or twice each day for two weeks, for example) adds to the price. And, if you choose to use a professional announcer and/or background sound effects, the price will rise accordingly.

To maximize your radio advertising investment, hire an advertising agency to help you plan your campaign. Their professionals will advise you on what kind of radio ad works best for your type of business, when it should run, and how to shape the message for greatest effect. Trained experts will prepare ad copy that will grab the listening audience's attention and, hopefully, inspire action.

Television

Television advertisements can grab your attention with eye-catching visual images, humor, drama or a strikingly simple message with a jaw-dropping effect. However you choose to get your point across to your target audience, television can make it happen…at a cost. As with radio advertising, time and placement is everything. The more popular the show, the more the ad will cost per time unit; ads that run during the Super Bowl, for example, cost many millions because the event's audience is worldwide and numbers in the billions. And, if you choose celebrities to represent your company and the product advertised, the ad cost will rise substantially.

Given your potential investment in a television ad, hire an agency that specializes in television advertising to produce it. An agency has the knowledge and expertise to make your ad happen with greatest impact for the dollars invested.

Internet

Invented over 40 years ago as a U.S. Department of Defense project, the Internet really came to life in the early 1980s as a quick, easy and convenient way for people to exchange and share information, photos and data. And, because the World Wide Web's (www) reach is international, the Internet has become one of the mainstays for companies to promote themselves and their products and services. It is now common practice for companies to include their website address on all office communications, promotions and advertising pieces.

Website Design

If you are considering setting up a website for your company or you are reevaluating the effectiveness of your company's existing site, the following information may prove useful.

Purpose and Objectives

A website must capture its users' attention, deliver clear and concise messages, pique interest and inform while allowing easy navigation and unique identification. A well-designed website contains pertinent information, accessible content and encourages exploration, all of which produces powerful branding.

A company's website integrates corporate-wide capabilities and communicates industry-specific offerings. Content may be arranged by industries and geographic regions served, if appropriate. With

the increasing popularity of smartphones and tablet devices, websites should be designed with these devices in mind.

Background Information

Beginning with the basics, first determine what you want your company's website to be and do, and this requires asking and answering a few questions:

1. **Who is your audience?** Are you trying to reach or connect with a particular group of viewers or the general public? Answering this question will drive your content and, to a large degree, the design or architecture of your site.

2. **What is your main topic?** Your company's offering of products and services is likely the main topic of your site, but you may want to include background information on your company, career opportunities available, staff information, office location, contact information and more.

3. **What about page layout considerations?** The way in which a website is organized and presents its information can make or break its effectiveness. Typically, websites welcome visitors on their home page and then allow them to navigate to sub-pages with links.

   - **The home page should be clean, clear and inviting**. It should display your corporate logo/logotype and colors and focus on the main topic. Include contact information as well.

   - **Organize your information for easy access.** Key information and sub-page listings should be placed above the fold (before you scroll down). Contact information, copyright, last update, secondary links should be at the bottom of the page. Avoid a page design that requires your visitor to scroll horizontally.

   - **Sub-pages should be dedicated to related topics** (i.e., *Who We Are*; *What We Do*; *What Products We Sell; What Positions are Available).* Include your corporate logo on each sub-page.

   - **Color and graphics should complement, not distract from, site content**: The use of different colors in page backgrounds and text should be limited to three or four plus neutrals. The background colors should contrast with the text. Keep your graphics to a minimum and do not use large images. Animated images are acceptable if they help to convey a point. Otherwise, they slow down the loading of your site.

   - **Think about SEO (search engine optimization):** Content is very important not only to convey your message clearly and concisely to the users of your site, but also to search engines that will catalog your site. SEO is all about getting your site seen first. The goal, therefore, is for your site to be at or near the top of the Google or Yahoo page when a user begins a search. Make sure your website designer is aware of SEO and plans to incorporate it into the site design.

   - **What about audio/video/Flash?** Sound and video are features that can make your website more dynamic and engaging. However, their use should be appropriate for the website

content. Adobe® Flash® , a proprietary software program, is an excellent option for games and stunning visuals. However, Flash is not compatible with iPhones® and iPads®, so it may not be the best option if you plan for your site to be universally accessible. When considering Flash, remember that:

- ✓ Each audio/video/Flash file must serve a clear purpose
- ✓ The audio/video/Flash file must enhance, not distract from, the site
- ✓ Captions must be provided for each audio/video/Flash file
- ✓ The site must note download times for audio/video/Flash files
- ✓ The site must provide links to downloads for media plug-ins

■ **Navigation should be easy.** Make sure visitors can easily and quickly find the information they need and want. There is nothing worse for a visitor than to spend time drilling down (clicking from page to page) for a nugget of information.

1. **Hire a website designer.** You can design your own site, but your company would be better served by a website design expert. Website designers are trained to help you create an attractive, informative, accessible and functional site for your target audience and other visitors. Do some research to find a designer or design shop that understands your business and has a reputation for working well with their clients and responding to their wishes and needs. Keep in mind, however, that the more complex the site, the more costly it will be to design and maintain.

2. **Test your site before you go live.** Once your site is designed, test it to make sure all the navigation links work and that it looks as good on other computers as it does on yours. Test it on both the Mac OS® and the Windows® operating system using a variety of browsers—Microsoft Explorer®, Google Chrome™, Safari®, Firefox®, Opera®. Also, be sure to try it on your iPad and your smartphone. If you feel the website needs adjustment, work with your designer. Be aware that the site will appear differently on various browsers.

Intranet (Internal) Website

Depending on the size of your company and the availability of computers to your employees, a company Intranet may be appropriate. The site should be designed with company security in mind, meaning a password will be needed in order to access it. This is a great way for companies to provide a wide variety of information to their employees about new products and services, upcoming events, human resource policies, benefits information and much more.

Social Media

Among the newer communications technologies are severalInternet-based services that enable people to connect with one another to share information about their daily lives. Companies are now finding these social media sites to be excellent tools for marketing their products and services. Below are brief

descriptions of the top sites. Please refer to the Management Methods Bulletin called *Guide to Using Social Media to Market Your Business* for valuable information should you decide to use social media to promote your business.

Facebook

Facebook was created in 2007 by a Harvard undergraduate as a way for students to connect and share information. The site now has over one billion users and reaches around the world.

It may seem unlikely that your company needs a Facebook page, but many companies in all industries are using the site to promote their products and services. Facebook provides an immediate connection with employees, customers and clients. The page is free to set up and easy to maintain. You must establish a personal Facebook account to set up a business page, but the two pages are entirely separate to the public. Business Facebook pages look the same as personal pages, but they have additional tabs at the top of the page that can be used to point the user to useful company information. There is also an "about" page where the company can post hours of operation, a map of its location, background information and other useful company facts. Business Facebook pages also have an administrative area for recent comments, messages from people who "like" your page, among other insights.

Go to https://www.facebook.com/business/build to get started.

Twitter

Twitter is an information network. Millions of people, organizations, and businesses use the site to discover and share new information.

Twitter allows anyone to read, write and share messages of up to 140 characters. These messages, or "Tweets," are public and available to anyone interested in them. Twitter users subscribe to your messages by following your account. Followers receive all of your messages in their timeline, a feed of all the accounts they have subscribed to. When you combine messages that are quick to write, easy to read, public, opt-in, and accessible anywhere, you have a powerful, real-time way of communicating.

Twitter has its own language. Since users are limited to 140 characters, including spaces, shortcuts have been created to help you get your point across easily and concisely. To link to a page, the at sign (@) is placed in front of the page link where you want to go. Click on the link, and you will land on the target Twitter page. If you want to send someone to a popular search on Twitter, a hashtag (#) is added to the beginning of the keyword. For example, suppose you want to search all Tweets with the word "blogging." Place a hashtag in front of the word "blogging," and when clicked on, you will land on a search page that shows all of the tweets that mention "blogging."

You may create your own custom background on your Twitter page and add any type of information to that area including your website, address, phone number, etc. You can also add basic biographical information to the top of your page. Usually, companies use their logos as their profile image.

Twitter for Business

As a business, you can use Twitter to quickly share information, gather market intelligence and insights, and build relationships with people who care about your company. You may discover that there is already a conversation about your business happening on Twitter. You can search for keywords in Twitter to find specific information of interest.

Twitter Best Practices

Build your following, reputation, and customers' trust with these simple practices:

- **Share** photos and behind-the-scenes information about your business. Even better, give a glimpse into developing projects and events. Users come to Twitter to get and share the latest, so give it to them!
- **Listen** regularly to monitor the comments about your company, brand, and products.
- **Ask** questions of your followers to glean valuable insights and show that you are listening.
- **Respond** to compliments and feedback in real time
- **Rewards.** Send Tweets about updates, special offers, discounts and time-sensitive deals.
- **Demonstrate wider leadership and know-how.** Reference articles and links about industry trends and developments, particularly those that you have incorporated into your company's operations.
- **Champion your stakeholders.** Retweet and reply publicly to great Tweets posted by your followers and customers.
- **Establish the right voice.** Twitter users tend to prefer a direct, genuine, and likable tone from your business, but think about your *voice* as you Tweet. How do you want your business to appear to the Twitter community?

Go to https://business.twitter.com/ to get going.

YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing website, created in February 2005, where users can upload, view and share videos. Users are able to display a wide variety of video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogs and short original videos.

Many companies now have YouTube channels. This is a great way to help people visualize what your company does. Any variety of videos can be posted—how-to's, safety dos/don'ts, company overviews and policies, etc. Videos from YouTube can be posted on your own website as well as Facebook and links to Twitter. Videos have a "sticky" quality, meaning they tend to keep people on your site longer.

Google+

Google+ was introduced to the public in 2011 and is a fairly "young" social network. Like Facebook, the site allows you to connect and communicate with your friends and colleagues. You can group your friends or colleagues in "circles," groups that you can create for particular interests, industries, etc. Because Google+ is new, it is constantly changing and improving. Google+ is noted to be a far better format for photography. If photos are important to your company's marketing strategy, you may want

to keep this in mind. Free company pages have been added, offering another way to spread your company's online reach.

Google+ Best Practices

- **Share**: Different people are interested in different parts of your business. Whether it's breaking news, updates, promotions, links, photos—even talking face-to-face with groups via easy-to-use video chat—Google+ lets you easily share the right things with the right customers.
- **Promote**: Help word get around. Put the +1 button anywhere you'd like people to be able to recommend your business, products or services to friends and contacts all across the web.
- **Measure**: How's your page doing and how could it do better? Google+ makes it easy to learn more about how your followers' interactions on your page affect your brand and your business.

Go to http://www.google.com/intl/en/+/business/get-started.html to set up your company page.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is an online resource for professionals. As of February 9, 2012, LinkedIn operates the world's largest Internet-based professional network with more than 150 million members in over 200 countries and territories. Individuals and companies can have pages on LinkedIn at no charge. However, users are charged a nominal membership fee for more in-depth features.

LinkedIn for individuals is essentially an online resume. Employees can add a page for free and place all their professional information on their profile. These pages are public and can be viewed by anyone online by default, however privacy controls are available. An individual can put as much or as little professional information on these pages as they choose. Professionals can connect with other professionals in the same industry or others. It's a powerful online networking tool and is often called the Facebook for professionals.

LinkedIn for companies is a good place to strengthen your company's online presence. Your employees and anyone interested in your company can join your company or group page. Online discussions can take place on these pages and help to build awareness of your company and its products and services. Questions and comments can be posted as well. You must have a free individual LinkedIn profile in order to create a company page or group.

Create a company page at http://learn.linkedin.com/company-pages.

Facility & Vehicles

All facilities and vehicles convey a corporate identity to customers, prospects, and the general public. They serve as billboards that continuously make impressions of a company and a business. Consistency in signature treatment, type, and color is paramount to ensuring effective branding.

Exterior Signage: Building and Monument

If your company's building is leased, contact your property management representative to determine your options for building and monument signage. If these are permitted, keep your branding consistent for your signage, using your company colors and typography, as well as your logo, if possible. If you own your building, the same rules apply, but contact the city for permits and signage rules and regulations.

Jobsite Signage and Labels

Jobsites may have different rules for site signage. Comply with these rules when designing your signs and labels. Incorporate your company's brand identity in the signage design while keeping the content easy to read and including your company contact information.

QR Codes

The QR (Quick Response) Code was invented by the Toyota subsidiary Denso Wave in 1994 to track vehicles during the manufacturing process. It was designed to allow its contents to be decoded at high speed. The QR Code has become one of the most popular types of two-dimensional barcodes.

Formerly confined to industrial uses, the QR Code has been adapted for consumer advertising and packaging because smartphones put a barcode reader in consumers' pockets for the first time. As a result, the QR Code has become a focus of advertising strategy, since it provides quick and effortless access to the brand's website. Beyond mere convenience to the consumer, this capability increases the conversion rate (that is, the chance that contact with the advertisement will convert to a sale) by coaxing qualified prospects further down the conversion funnel without any delay or effort, bringing the viewer to the advertiser's site immediately, where a longer and more targeted sales pitch may continue.

The presence of a QR Code in advertisements also provides a sense to some consumers that those brands are on the "cutting edge," although the novelty will eventually wear off. (A similar process happened in the 1990s, when the presence of URLs in advertisements seemed high-tech to many consumers for a few years.)

QR codes are free to create online, and there are numerous websites where they can be created. One such site is http://keremerkan.net/qr-code-and-2d-code-generator. If your smartphone doesn't come equipped with a QR code reader; there are multiple readers available for all brands of phones. Search for "QR code reader" in your phone's app store and choose a free one with good ratings.

Files and Formats – Usage Guidelines

Not all files are created equal! Depending on what the publication is and how it will be used, certain files are better than others.

Below are guidelines suggesting the appropriate file type for each application to ensure quality results. There are always exceptions to the rule, but this should give you a good start.

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Six Types of Files

There are five main types of formats you can use for printing and for online use. These are **EPS**, **GIF**, **JPEG**, **PNG** and **TIFF**. You can also use **PDF** files for printing with excellent results. If you plan to use a commercial printer or press agency to produce a publication, always defer to their specifications. These will vary and be very specific to the publication. Keep in mind resolution, color and file type and size. Below are definitions of these six types of files and their most appropriate applications.

EPS (Encapsulated PostScript)

In digital prepress, EPS is an alternative picture file format that allows PostScript data to be stored and edited and is easy to transfer between computer operating systems. EPS files are most often used for high-quality printing and are only used in certain programs such as Adobe Illustrator. A design or printing professional may use these types of files, but these files will rarely show up in your day-to-day marketing. If you are given EPS files with your logo or any other print files you have created, keep them safe for future printing use. Unless you have the proper software (Adobe Creative Suite or QuarkXPress, for example), you most likely will not be able to open EPS files.

EPS files are often used in printing and will give a higher quality image. They typically contain "vectors" that enable the image to be proportionally sized without loss of quality.

GIF (Graphics Interchange Format)

GIF is a common image format that uses up to 256 colors. GIF images work best for text, sharp lines, and large areas of continuous color. GIF images can be animated and can have one color set as transparent.

Not recommended for high quality printing, GIF files are best used on the web or for screen use.

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group)

JPEG, or JPG, is a common image compression format capable of including more than 16 million unique colors. JPG images are best suited for textures, photographs, and gradients. A JPG will have a white square background in the image, whereas GIF and PNG files will have a transparent background. JPGs are the most common format for image files, but may not always print well.

While JPEGs are preferred for onscreen applications, they can also be used for some printing, but are not preferred for high-quality printing.

PDF (Portable Document Format)

PDF was created by Adobe for the transfer of designs across multiple computer platforms. Documents in the PDF format can be viewed, navigated and printed from any computer, regardless of the typefaces or software programs used to create the original.

Most agencies and printing companies are equipped to use these files for printing high-quality reproductions. Please keep their specifications in mind for best quality.

PNG (Portable Network Graphic)

PNG was created to be a more powerful alternative to the GIF file format. PNGs are not restricted to the 256 color limitation of GIF files, support better transparency options, and have better compression. They do not support the multiple frames and simple animation of GIF files.

PNG graphics are best used on the web, for screen use, and in when printing from an office software package.

TIFF (Tagged Image File Format)

TIFF, or TIF, is a a file format that provides an independent transport mechanism for faster images and integrates high-end and desktop publishing formats.

This file format is appropriate for high-quality printing.

Formats that you will most often encounter in day-to-day marketing are JPGs and PDFs for printing and GIFs and PNGs for web applications. If you receive any of the other types of files and are not able to open them, keep them on hand for future printing projects.

Color

Most files will be provided in one of two of the following color modes, unless printing in black and white. Typically CMYK is used for high-quality printing like brochures and catalogs. RGB is usually used for the web, but may be used for some printing applications such as printing trade show booth art (large scale graphics). As always, pay attention to the specifications from the printing agency.

CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black)

These are primary colors used for four-color process color reproduction. Black (K) is added to enhance color and contrast.

RGB (Red, Green Blue)

These are primary additive colors used in display devices and scanners. Files that are used for onscreen viewing should be in RGB mode.

In printing processes, colors will be referred to as "Spot Color" and "Process Color." The difference is explained below.

Spot Color

This is a specific color mix, most frequently used to match the color of a company's logo or logotype. In two-color printing, spot color may be the second color used in addition to black to add visual interest to a printed piece. For example, a two color ad may be red and black only. Spot colors are also called PMS (Pantone Matching System) colors.

Process Color

These are the primary colors—cyan, magenta, yellow and black— used in 4-color process printing. These are used when a project such as a catalog or brochure is printed on a printing press. Spot colors may be

added to process color to create a unique look or to match your corporate color, or your corporate color may be "built" from a combination of the colors that comprise process color.

Resolution

Along with format specifications, resolution (the clarity of the image) is key. The higher the image resolution, the better the quality. When putting together a profile or brochure, the images will only look as good as they did when originally created. If the image is blurry when you send it, it will be blurry when printed.

A general rule of thumb is that any image to be printed should be at a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch). When placing an image on the web, it should be no larger than 72 dpi. Many magazines print at 150 dpi and newspapers print at 135 dpi.

Images should be sent in the actual size that you want them to appear. Do not enlarge or reduce an image by more than 20 percent. This is a general rule of thumb, and you will notice the difference in your final printed application.

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