



Providing Guidance for Business Growth for 30 Years

March 24, 2014

In Today's Weekly Connection:

- ✦ **7 Stupid Branding Mistakes**
- ✦ **Program Success of the Week – Code 3 Spices**
- ✦ **Resource of the Week - Comparing Small Business Credit Cards**
- ✦ **Neoserra/WebCATS Update – Economic Impact Attribution**
- ✦ **Moves and News – WBOS – March 27th**
- ✦ **America's SBDC Network Connect**

7 Stupid Branding Mistakes

By Sujana Patel on *entrepreneur.com*, 3/5/14 - When you think about great branding, Coca Cola's distinctive red and white lettering, Nike's swoosh and Adidas's three stripes likely come to mind. But as a small business, imagining the level of investment that's gone into these iconic images can make the thought of undertaking your own branding initiative seem overwhelming. It's actually easier to do than most imagine. Just make sure to avoid some common pitfalls and branding mistakes.

- 1. Not understanding the power of a brand.** From a customer-relationship perspective, having a strong brand is obviously advantageous. For instance, when people think of online shoe purchases, they think of Zappos. You want to have that kind of immediate, definitive relationship with your buyers as well.
- 2. Forgetting to establish defined brand guidelines.** When creating a brand identity, you'll want to establish defined guidelines that cover all of the following elements (as well as any others that are relevant to your field).
- 3. Overcomplicating your brand.** Take a look at how Coca Cola's classic [script logo](#) has changed since its first usage in 1887. While the fonts used have varied slightly, the original look is still largely intact after more than 127 years of service. Small businesses can learn a lesson from this beverage industry giant
- 4. Falling into the vague branding trap.** But then again, don't go the opposite direction and develop brand guidelines and elements that reveal nothing about your company and its value proposition. Chances are you've seen this before in generic logos or in marketing language that's downright repetitive.
- 5. "Cheating" on your brand guidelines.** Every time you deviate from your stated brand guidelines, you dilute their power by some small amount. By doing so, you're essentially introducing a new brand image to your customers, diminishing the strength of the association they'd have to a more unified branding campaign.
- 6. Not policing your brand's usage.** Developing and implementing your small business's brand guidelines is only half the battle. In addition, you've got to be proactive about monitoring where and how others are using your branded elements on your behalf. If not,

you could have competitors creating a logo that looks similar, a review website using your logo and not linking back or a partner publishing an ad featuring your logo but with the wrong colors.

7. Rolling out brand changes poorly. There's nothing wrong with rebranding. That is, unless you approach it *poorly*. Bear in mind any changes you make to your established brand reduces the connection you've built with your customers. Therefore, it's important to only make changes when the benefits truly outweigh the risks of losing business. If you do decide to make an alteration, you need to clearly educate your followers on the changes you're making.

See details at: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/231966>

Program Success of the Week – Code 3 Spices

Transforming passion into profit that gives back to “those who serve” is one of the best ways to describe Code 3 Spices. The two-man spice rub business, which launched in Maryville, Ill. in late 2012, is the brainchild of Chris Bohnemeier - a barbecue enthusiast, grill master and former IT professional- and his long-time friend and fellow BBQ aficionado Mike Radosevich, a veteran police officer.

Teaming with a local manufacturer to replicate their award winning blends, the co-founders marketed their way onto the shelves of more than 120 grocery stores, butcher shops and specialty outlets. Their homegrown, proprietary spice mixes - 5-0 Rub, Backdraft Rub, Sea Dog Rub, Grunt Rub, and Rescue Rub - are sent mail-order across the country and sold in retail locations throughout a seven-state area.

The Code 3 Spice partners credit the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and its Metro East Small Business Development Center for providing a generous amount of marketing research and expertise during their startup. “When our business took off and began growing faster than we’d imagined, SIU-E and the SBDC staff stepped in to help us,” Bohnemeier said. “They provided expert input on understanding our market opportunities and managing our record growth. With their help, we’re on track to reach 400-plus locations this year.”

“From the very beginning, it was about giving back,” said Bohnemeier. “My whole family comes from law enforcement and Mike has served in that capacity for 12 years. We’ve been friends for a long time and had won several BBQ competitions. Over time, the idea (of a spice rub business) built itself.” With the tagline, “Spicing It Up For Those Who Serve,” the company is passionate about charities that support injured and fallen first responders and military personnel. From Day One, Chris and Mike agreed to donate a portion of every colorfully capped bottle sold to a deserving organization, including The Backstoppers Inc. (headquartered in St. Louis), Safe Call Now.org and Operation Homefront.

“We are passionate about supporting these extremely worthy charities that provide tangible support to members of the military and to emergency responders,” Radosevich said. “These charities do a terrific job and always there whenever they’re needed to support the men and women who serve others.”

The entrepreneurs developed an inexpensive, yet effective, marketing approach utilizing social media. In 15 months of operation, Code 3 Spices gained more than 11,000 Facebook fans and 600 Twitter followers along with enthusiastic repeat customers. In fact, Chris and Mike made their first international sale in 2013, shipping a case of spice blends to a Code 3 fanatic in New Zealand.

"Code 3 Spices is a classic example of how doing something you love and giving back to your community can produce tremendous dividends," says Patrick McKeehan, director at the SIU-E SBDC. "I am always impressed by Mike and Chris – it is a pleasure to be associated with this great Metro East start-up."

See more at: <http://www.code3spices.com/>

Resource of the Week – Comparing Small Business Credit Cards

Open the link below to see a comparison of credit cards suited for small business owners. <http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/top-credit-cards/nerdwallets-best-small-business-credit-cards/>

Neoserra/WebCATS Update – Economic Impact Attribution

Clients filling out the electronic survey will have their economic impact attributed to the center listed in their client detail in WebCATS/Neoserra. Since government contracting clients must be signed up with a PTAC this means all their economic impact will be attributed to the PTAC even though they may also be getting SBDC counseling. It is crucial that those of you sharing clients work to make sure each funding source and center gets the proper credit for impact created by the client.

Moves and News

2014 Women Business Owners Symposium (WBOS)

The State of Illinois and the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) are proud to announce the 2nd annual [2014 Women Business Owners Symposium \(WBOS\)](#). The WBOS is a full-day program that offers both current and future women business owners access to a variety of experts, programs, and opportunities that will help grow their businesses. Last year, WBOS concluded with a tremendous turnout of about 1,000 attendees, and 812 pre-registered companies across various industries and sectors. Let's see if we can make this year even bigger!

WBOS is March 27th, 2014 (in Chicago, IL) so make sure to [register today!](#)



America's SBDC Network Connect

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see the March 20, 2014 edition of [America's SBDC Network Connect newsletter](#).

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The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and DCEO Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology each Monday to members of the DCEO Illinois SBDC Network to provide the service delivery partners with regular updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. You may send any information to share with the Illinois SBDC Network to Tom.Becker@illinois.gov. Please feel free to forward this update to other interested resource providers and key stakeholders.

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