

LEVERAGING YOUR BRAND...

in print

1. **Be clear on your messaging.** Know what you want to say in each piece and limit it to one key idea.
2. **Keep it simple.** You only have a few seconds to capture someone's attention. The simpler your piece, the clearer your message can come across and the more likely people are to get it.
3. **Be familiar with the main visual elements of your brand:** colours, typefaces, logo and tone. Use them consistently in all print media.
4. **Use a copywriter.** There is nothing worse than something that looks great but has no substance. A good copywriter will provide clear communication of your message in your brand's voice usually in a punchier, more concise and clearer way than you can.
5. **Use high-resolution images.** Images for print need to be much higher than for the web. If you need something fairly generic, use stock imagery. If you need something specific (eg. your product, office or a headshot) use a professional photographer.
6. **If you're designing your pieces yourself, work closely with your printer.** Good printers are a wealth of information and ideas. Tap into this resource early on in the planning of your piece to save time and money.
7. **Use a graphic designer.** Graphic designers are trained professionals in visual communications. They use professional layout and graphics programs that are much broader in scope than what most people have available to them. They will also have some great ideas on how you can use your marketing dollars for maximum impact.
8. **Your paper choice can really help reinforce (or counteract) your brand messaging.** Thick heavy stock sends a message of solid credibility. Flimsy stock looks and feels cheap. High-gloss stock can be eye catching as colours and images look particularly rich. A textured matte stock with flecks of paper fibers looks natural, even environmentally friendly.
9. **Choose inks wisely.** Learn how printers work and what they can create. Traditional CMYK printers might be limited in what they can produce. Pantone is premixed ink that keeps colour consistent no matter where they are printed. This means they might be more expensive, but the cost can be worth it. A good designer can plan your colours to be most cost effective.
10. **Make your materials interactive.** People like discoveries and surprises so don't give everything away on the first page or cover. Create curiosity and invite the viewer to open your brochure, envelope, catalogue, etc. This allows them to control their experience rather than having it forced upon them. ■
4. **Emphasize what you offer rather than who you are.** People want to know what you can do for them. Make sure this is stated on your home page, up front, clear and concise.
5. **Use flash and animations with intention, rather than because it looks cool.** People generally just want to get to the meat of your site as soon as possible. If you have a flash introduction, always give your viewer the option to skip it!
6. **Don't assume your viewers have your taste in music.** Many people are already listening to their own music so when a site loads with music already playing, this is irritating! That, in and of itself, can send a viewer running from your site before they've read three words.
7. **Update your website frequently.** It is very unprofessional to have your promotions or news from 6 months ago on the front page. Also, check and fix all broken links.
8. **Use a professional copywriter.** The content of your site is arguably even more important than how it looks. People are going to your site for information, so you want this information accessible in an easy to read, friendly voice that reflects your brand.
9. **E-newsletters, e-zines, blogs and forums are all effective ways to interact with your customers on their terms.** The sign up for your newsletter, or they choose to read your articles, or they want to participate in your forum. All of these mediums help to establish you as an expert as long as you are providing useful, relevant information. If you try to use them as sales pitches, however, they won't work.
10. **Use your other online tools to reinforce your brand identity.** Make sure that you use an email signature that includes your logo and URL. Include your logo and a link to your site on all newsletters, articles or postings. If you sell a product or have a sign up form for your electronic publications, use a customized "thank you" page. ■

online

1. **Get your website done right.** It's not enough to just have a website; your website needs to convey the quality of your products and/or services. The Internet is where most people do their research and if they don't like what they see, they will never pick up the phone.
2. **Consistency.** Make sure your website's look is consistent with all your other forms of promotion (business cards, brochures, advertisements, etc.) This way your viewers know they have arrived at the right place. Ensure consistency between pages. This makes it easier for a viewer to find their way around your site and have a more positive experience.
3. **Search Engine Optimization.** Hire someone who specializes in this if you have the budget. If not, make sure your site is accessible to search engines. Make all your copy live and searchable. Use head tags and keywords. Take advantage of Google Adwords and other tools to help boost your ratings and drive traffic to your site.

Content supplied by Vancouver design firm Nimble Creative. www.nimblecreative.com