



# You Get What You Pay For

## THE ROI OF A REAL BRAND PROCESS

by Rachel Downey

In America, we are inundated with hundreds of brands every day—on TV, on our clothes, in the store, in our own homes. Just sitting here in Starbucks, I see Jeep, Sunoco, Chase, Apple, HP and several news journals. In fact, I chose Starbucks because of the brand—their yummy chai tea latte and free trade coffee, the free Pick of the Week song and their philanthropy, the atmosphere, the experience, the plethora of outlets for my laptop.

It would not come as a surprise that all of these megabrands pour millions of dollars into developing and maintaining their brand so that we consumers love them loyally. But what can the little guy do?

Well, there are certainly a lot of designers out there in the world, many of them quite talented and many of them can give you a very nice logo. But a logo in and of itself is not a brand. A brand requires strategy to move toward goals, it requires consistent and deliberate use and above all, it must be authentic. *See Building Your Brand House: A Primer* And to do all that, it requires an investment in your brand as a long term asset of your business.

Every now and again I get a spam from a “logos for \$99” website. They used to irritate me; now I laugh. A canned, crappy or even not-so-crappy logo can’t get anyone anywhere. What is the mark’s meaning, how does it connect with your audience and build lasting relationships,

what are the messages that support it and bring it to life and how will it help you take your business to the next level?

The process of developing a Brand should include a review of your business plan, interviews of key stakeholders and leadership, and an honest look at how people think about your business now—the good, the bad, the indifferences and the misperceptions. Using this input, you can develop a brand brief—a creative brief defining what your brand needs to do for you to help you meet your goals.

Next step, logo and messaging. These work together to associate what you do, who you do it for and what you stand for with a visual mark. Your key messages should come through in every communication you put out there in the world, including verbally from employees. Make sure they are educated on how to talk about the business and how to deliver experiences for people who interact with your company.

Communications materials are next. Your website, print materials and social media presence should consistently hit those key messages, but in slightly different ways, considering the optimal delivery of each medium.

By moving through a deliberate and goal-driven process when thinking about your brand, you will have laid the foundation for an identity and buyer experience that will be authentic, elicit connective experiences and turn your customers into loyal and loving advocates. ■

### About the Author

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As principal and founder of Studio Graphique, a Branding Consultancy and Environmental Graphic Design firm, Rachel is the resident visionary for the organization and its staff. She has established the philosophy, direction and culture of the firm which is a highly collaborative and creative environment focused on improving life experiences and opportunities for the immediate community and beyond. Rachel holds a BFA in Visual Communication Design from Kent State University and is a graduate of the Cleveland Bridge Builders, a year-long program for aspiring leaders. She has studied at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland and is certified in Reiki I. Rachel resides in South Euclid, Ohio with her son Simon, 5, and husband Jason, an architect.