

PROMO POWER



By Larry Mersereau

Personality

Does your business have a personality?

I can assure you that it does. The big question is, did you design your personality, or did it just sort of happen?

Smart organizations realize that their customers are all human beings. Yes, even if you sell business to business, human beings still make the buying (or not to buy) decision. When human beings make contact with your business, they immediately sense your personality.

Do you know what your business' personality is? It's important because it may well be the biggest single difference between you and your competitors.

People prefer to deal with human beings that seem to appreciate their business. It trumps convenience, variety...even price. People will go out of their way, buy unfamiliar brands, and pay more to deal with people who treat them well.

Smart organizations plan carefully around personality and you should, too.

Look at Southwest Airlines, the only consistently profitable company in their industry. Their customers love them for only one reason: personality. They operate the same uncomfortable equipment as their competitors. They operate in and out of the same hostile zones (airports) as their competitors. They actually offer LESS than their competitors in terms of creature comforts and amenities. But, people

have a good time with them. They like being treated like humans, a concept the other airlines have not been able to grasp.

For the next couple of days, be an observer of corporate personality. What's your bank like? Your dry cleaner? The supermarket? Write down what personality you identified for each one, and notice how easy it is to spot. Believe me, people spot your personality just as easily, so it's important for you to take control of what it's going to be.

So, what do you want your company's personality to be? Fun? Deadly serious? Detail-oriented? Somber? Of course, a funeral home would want to have a different personality from a pizzeria. But, one pizzeria can definitely have a different personality from any other in their market.

Here's how to get started. First, be real. You can't fake personality. If you're a grump and everyone who works with you is a grump, you're not going to be a fun place to do business with. But, I'm assuming you've got a somewhat engaging personality. It may be quiet or loud, outgoing or shy, but I have to assume that there are people who like you. If you don't know what your personality is, ask your friends to tell you honestly what they see.

Make sure everyone that works there understands what your personality is going to be, and make sure they're all trained and committed to supporting it.

From now on, who you hire, how you decorate the place, the language, colors and graphic design you use in your marketing materials, what media you advertise in (everything about your business) should reflect and reinforce your personality.

If you want to stand out from the

crowd of options your prospects have to choose from, a little personality will go a long way. ■



BONUS Tip

If you own your own business, chances are your own personality was your company's personality in the early days. Everyone dealt with you, because you were the only one there.

But, now you have *staff*. The lowest paid people in your company probably answer the phone. Now it's their personality the customer or prospect experiences first. If you didn't hire right and train them well, your company's personality just changed.

Now you have *sales people*. They put their own personal spin on your products' benefits and use their own sales strategies and tactics. They may be the only people your customers and prospects ever hear from. If you didn't hire right and train them well, your company's personality changed again.

If customers and prospects deal with a number of people in your organization, and they each inject their own personalities into the mix, the customer is confused. If they're making a buying decision, they are far less likely to say "yes" if they're confused. Don't let it happen to you.

Larry Mersereau helps small businesses create killer marketing and advertising. Author of four books on sales and marketing, he consults with select clients and speaks to dozens audiences each year. More info at <http://promopower.com>.