



Small Businesses Can Beat the Big Guys

**How Can a Small Business
Outperform Larger Competitors?**

branding

› **A Superior Customer Experience Gives You a Competitive Edge**

With so many similar products and services on the market today, it's difficult for small businesses to differentiate themselves from larger competitors. So, how do you, as a small business, gain a competitive edge against larger businesses? Deliver a better customer experience based on a solid brand strategy executed with discipline and excellence.

Small businesses can be better at creating relationships with customers and providing a consistent customer experience. This is easier for small businesses to do than very large businesses because they are more easily controlled. With fewer employees and a smaller volume of personal interaction, owners have more control over the experience that each employee delivers to customers via phone conversations, in-store encounters, e-mail communications and Web site transactions. And with a sound brand strategy, executed with discipline using professional-quality marketing tactics, small businesses can indeed beat the big guys.



Your brand strategy dictates how your business is perceived by your customers and competitors – it makes you stand out in the marketplace. Your brand strategy is bigger than a company slogan or logo. It is an umbrella philosophy that guides the decisions you make around marketing your products and services to your customers. It helps you make decisions about how to create a relationship between your business and your customers. It can guide your hiring practices, your real estate choices, your Web site design practices, your e-mail marketing strategies

and much more. Larger companies like Nike and Starbucks are superior at creating relationships with their customers and building lifelong loyalty. But, branding isn't just for big companies with huge advertising budgets. The same tools and techniques can be used by small businesses.

Consider this scenario: A small, independent retailer is suddenly threatened by the appearance of a big-box megastore in the neighborhood, hoping to steal customers with its lower prices and higher volume. The small business, while perceived as the underdog,

does not have to go under in a few short months. In fact, by leveraging the strengths of being small, partnering with experts and maintaining brand discipline, a small business can prosper.

› **Professional Marketing Tactics Available to Small Businesses**

The smaller business can offer more superior customer service and a better overall experience with the brand. Beyond a simple retail exchange, a small business can offer more than just the products on their shelves, including personal service, specialized experiences and memorable promotions.

“The most successful branding is achieved by businesses that understand their customers’ needs and connect with them on an emotional level.”

Starting with the in-store experience itself, small businesses can take advantage of the same professional practices that make big businesses look big. Professionally designed store signage, direct mail pieces and logoed apparel can make a small business look bigger. With help from an expert, using out-of-the-box templates or something more customized, a small business can have an online Web presence that looks professional and delivers the kind of branding customers get with bigger businesses. With e-mail marketing today, a small business can provide very personalized communications for its customers, offering in-store deals, last-minute sales, special offers and preferred buyer clubs. E-mail newsletters provide small businesses with an easy-to-manage way of keeping in touch with customers on a regular basis.

› **Create an Emotional Connection with Customers**

The most successful branding is achieved by businesses that understand their customers’ needs and connect with them on an emotional level. You can be more than a nameless, faceless corporate entity. You and your employees are real people – friends, neighbors and members of the community – who can do a better job at making a connection and gaining the trust of potential customers. Consult with a professional about how to use things like printed business communications, e-mail and your Web site. You will learn more about your customers and tap that knowledge to offer something unique and compelling to your best customers, driving sales and

long-term loyalty. While you may be selling a product that is very similar to one of your larger competitors, by reaching out and communicating on a highly relevant level, customers will consistently choose your business.

› **Let the Experts Help**

Let's say, for example, you own a store that sells fresh produce. If a supermarket opens around the corner that offers exotic fruit from all over the world at discounted prices, don't assume you'll be run out of town. With discipline and help from experts, you can survive!

Customers patronize your store because they get the best quality fruit and superior customer service. You remember all your customers by their first names. You are highly knowledgeable about your produce and you share that freely. Consider using an e-mail newsletter to share your knowledge with all your customers. Provide recipes and ideas for using seasonal produce in daily menus, encouraging your customers to come in more often. Keep in touch with a regular e-mail marketing campaign that sends an automated e-mail every week to your best customers, providing special deals and coupons. Create a frequent buyers club and provide logoed shopping bags as a gift for their patronage. Eventually, your customers will choose your store more often than your competitor because you've become a trusted advisor and friend when it comes to the best produce and good food. You've created an emotional connection with your customers that is based on a real understanding of their needs and reinforced with professional-level branding and marketing tactics. That's good business – maintaining an emotional connection between your store and your customers.

› **Be Disciplined**

Delivering a great experience for your customers takes discipline and focus. Using your brand as a guidepost, developing elements of your brand that really connect with your customers and their needs. Your brand image is as important as your product itself. Give your customers something

more – sell an experience and not just goods and services. Give them an experience that they trust and will want to come back to again and again.

Don't go it alone. Consult with experts and professionals to help develop and execute professional-level marketing tactics that will help you succeed. Beginning with the basics, like a logo that instantly communicates your brand, and continuing through your e-mail customer communications and Web site, professionals can help ensure that you're delivering a consistent brand experience to your customers. Let DELUXE help you build a brand that will beat the competition. With a partner to help deliver professionally designed logos, promotional items, printed materials, e-mail marketing campaigns and Web sites, you'll look as good or better than the big guys, and you'll be prepared to deliver a superior customer experience. DELUXE offers a full range of branding and marketing services to help you get and keep your best customers.