

The 7 Bs of Branding

B authentic. Share your story. Tell us who you are and why your company or organization exists, but spare us the hype. If you're making a mass market product, please don't use the word "artisan" to describe it. Show me real people using a real product, and if it's well made and useful, I'm much more likely to tell my friends about it.

B consistent. Your brand image is shaped by everything your company or organization says or does—and how you say it. Everything from your packaging to how you respond to complaints on your Facebook page should reflect how you want people to feel about your company. If you've got folks Tweeting for you, give them some guidelines about content and tone. Map out how you want people to think about your brand and review every message and action to make sure it reflects that image.

B bold. There are countless salsa brands on the shelves. Why would anyone go gaga over yours? Surprise your customers. Add carrots or other unexpected ingredients. Tell people your salsa tastes great on ice cream. Use compostable packaging. Give it a name that's fun to say aloud. Create a stunningly beautiful label. Or make it so delicious that no one can stop eating it.

B personal. People relate to people, not companies and organizations. You're building relationships with individuals. Find out what you can about your customers and supporters, and communicate with them about the things they care about or enjoy. Use "I" and "we," not they. Tell us a little about yourself. Let the people using social media on behalf of your company identify themselves. Be personal, but don't get nosy.

B entertaining. Make us laugh, make us cry, make us *fee*/something, and we'll keep coming back for more. Tell your story with pictures, videos, anecdotes, testimonials, cartoons, and jokes. Create an experience, not just a product, and we'll want to bring our friends along next time.

B generous. Support the causes you believe in. Reward your customers when they get involved. Give out lots of free samples. Help out newcomers, even if they're potential competitors. Be a part of your community. Tell us how you're helping, but just give us the facts. If we think you're really amazing, we'll do your bragging for you.

B buzzworthy. Find a great product from another part of the country and sell it here. Deliver your product via adult tricycles. Counter a heat wave with a discount for every degree the temperature rises. Recruit a "strange bedfellow" to partner with you on a new campaign. Give us something to talk about, and we will.

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