

Columns

12/27/2012

Please Allow Me to Reintroduce Myself

Katie Dubow



You know what they say about first impressions lasting a lifetime? Baloney! From people to brands and politicians, this country is all about second chances. You just have to know how to reintroduce yourself properly and to the right people.

We decided to re-launch Garden Media Group for a multitude of reasons. One, a new generation entered the fold: me. My mother, Susan McCoy, started her public relations business 25 years ago and last year I came home to roost.

She wanted the company to have my stamp on it.

Second, one of our clients, Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, suggested it. When we offered a sneak peek of our new website to Amy Daniel, Fall Creek's marketing manager, she told us our brand needed a facelift. In a very thoughtful and uplifting manner, she said, "Your brand does not represent the caliber of work you're producing or the reputation of the firm."

When I visit IGCs, I notice the trend is not just two, but often three, generations working the family business. Re-branding allows this fresh, young blood a chance to take a new kind of ownership in the company. But people are often afraid of change. Having an outside pair of eyes critique your business, your perceived value in the community and your competition is a worthwhile exercise—just remember to have an open mind.

Perceived value is hugely overlooked in our industry, while companies like Apple take advantage of it with each new product launch. Perceived value is your ability to satisfy customers' needs and to enhance what they believe your products or plants are worth.

A company "face lift" with a new brand package sends a message that something new, fresh and exciting is going on. It says you are keeping current and care about all your customer touch points. And this, in turn, greatly increases your perceived value—which increases the bottom line.

At Garden Media, one of our specialties is launching new brands, like the new Brazelberries Collection of ornamental berry shrubs. We have learned more than a few tricks over the years and applied them when we re-launched our brand. Here's what worked for us:

Plan Your Launch Strategy. Our goal was to get noticed by old and new customers and the media. Decide what your goal is, who you want to inform about your new brand and how you want to tell them. Determine how much you want to spend and what your time frame is. Make a detailed list of where your current logo or brand is shown (signage, website, blog, email signatures, letterhead, etc.) and make sure you consider the impact of your new brand and how to make the necessary changes.

Create Branded Kits. We put together branded collateral, including new business cards, signage, note cards, notepads, Post-it notes, pens and thermal mugs all wrapped up in a new Garden Media tote bag. We also had new headshots taken that we branded for our social media accounts.

Host a Launch Event. Throw a big party! We launched our brand at this year's Garden Writers Association Symposium, but you can do it anytime. Invite the local media. Hand out branded gift bags.

Publicize yourself. Send a press release to local media and pertinent trade publications like Green Profit. Push it out on all of your social media channels. No social channels? A re-branding is a great time to start!

Have it all planned to drop at the same time. Timing is key. Plan, plan, plan.

Launching a new brand can be scary, intimidating and expensive, but the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages when you're given the chance to re-introduce yourself. **GP**

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