

# The Power of Your Brand: Your Edge in the Marketplace.

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originally published on *NaturalMarketWatch.com*, Spring 2006



What makes your business **special**?  
Why should I shop at **your store** instead of your competitors?  
You know the reasons, but **do your customers?**

You might not realize it, but if you're in business, **you have a brand.**

A brand is not your name or your logo - those are just the symbols we use to identify it. Your brand is simply your image in the minds of your customers and the general public. Marty Neumeier, author of *The Brand Gap*, sums it up this way: "It's not what YOU say it is - it's what THEY say it is." You've heard the saying: image is *everything*. More importantly: *everything* is image -- *everything* people see and experience in contact with your business or products is your image and contributes to the essence of your brand.

What images do people keep in their minds when they look at your store for the first time? What messages do they get when they call on the phone to ask your employee for information, or look at your ad in the newspaper? How do they feel when they leave your store? Will they want to come back? The ultimate question you can ask your customers: "Would you recommend my product or service to a friend?" If the answer is yes, you have a positive brand image and the most effective advertising that money can't buy.

Good planning and good design contribute to the positive aspects of your brand, and a lack of them detracts noticeably. You can't control your customers' thoughts and preferences, but you *can* make your store more appealing. You *can* fill it with the kind of products and features that best meet the needs and desires of your target customer. You *can* hire and train knowledgeable, friendly staff. Together, these steps can create an experience that makes them feel good about their choice to shop at your store.

Every aspect of your business, when done well, is an opportunity to add strength to your brand, and anything you aren't doing well will weaken it. So, it's important to focus on what you are doing or can do well, address those things that you can improve, and eliminate or avoid anything that won't contribute to a positive experience.

## How much power can a brand have?

Look at today's ultimate brand - Starbucks.

Market value: \$27 billion  
Book value of their assets: \$2.1 billion  
**Brand Equity:** \$24.9 billion or  
**92% of their total net worth!**



I know what you're thinking - "That's Starbucks, the giant mega-corporation. I'm just a Ma & Pa with one store". For their first eleven years, there were only two Starbucks. The first was opened in Seattle in 1971 by three partners, teachers Jerry Baldwin (English), and Zev Siegel (History), and writer Gordon Bowker.

Had Howard Schultz not joined the company in 1982, they might still be small today. It was his vision, after touring espresso bars in Italy, to bring back that same lifestyle experience that for many has become a required daily ritual.



Starbucks not only changed the price of a basic cup of coffee from a quarter to nearly \$2 (with premium choices that cost twice as much), but it created a whole new culture, particularly among young urban professionals and students, for socializing and intellectual discussion.

Maybe we can't expect to ever build our brand to the level that Starbucks attained, but we can learn some valuable lessons from their success.



*First lesson:*

### **There are no boring products – only boring (stores) brands**

They took a pedestrian commodity and turned it into a high-end, must have accessory. Everything that goes in a Starbucks was designed that way in order to leave one impression on everyone who walks through their door: this is the finest place to experience the best coffee. *Everything* means purchasing the best beans, roasting them to control the quality, strict limits on freshness of their products, rigorous training and uniforms for their employees, well-designed graphics, store décor and furnishings, and to compliment their coffee: high-end baked goods, beverages & accessories. Schultz left nothing to chance - his total commitment focused on establishing and maintaining the highest standards and then relentlessly guarding their position as the number one brand.

*The biggest lesson we can learn:*

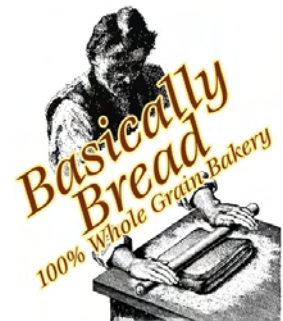
### **You don't have to be cheap if you're good**

Only one competitor can be the cheapest – the others have to use branding. The stronger the brand, the greater their profit margin. To get into Starbucks, people often circle their crowded parking lots until they can find a space – just to have a chance to buy the most expensive cup of coffee. Starbucks has built a *charismatic brand* – any product service or company for which people believe there's no substitute. Any brand can be charismatic, even yours.

*Another lesson:*

### **A brand that lasts has substance behind the image**

John Kuklinski, owner of B&C Nutrition in Hoover, AL, bakes all of his breads by hand using organic whole grains and the purest natural ingredients. Just once each week, for over a dozen years, John gets up early to bake. He simply loves to bake, and his customers know to be there on Mondays if they hope to buy some of his fabulous breads.



*Last lesson:*

### **The power of a brand increases with use.**

After years of exposure, Nike only needs their swoosh on their products and McDonalds displays only the golden arches – names are no longer required. Don't miss an opportunity to be associated with community events or any vehicle that will give your brand positive exposure. Make sure your name and logo are prominently displayed inside and out, and on all marketing materials. Private label products are a huge opportunity. Where else can customers go to buy your own branded products? Putting your brand on supplements, peanut butter, packaged bulk, deli salads or baked goods will build your name recognition and your profits. Think of your brand as living in a never-ending play and every person in your company is an actor. People see the play whenever and wherever they see your brand. If it is memorable and they like it – they will tell others. That is your brand at it's best.

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