

# Ask SCORE

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[www.ScoreFoxValley.org](http://www.ScoreFoxValley.org)

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## Advertising & Marketing

### Include Branding as Part of Your Marketing Strategy

A great product or first-class service is seldom enough to sustain a lasting impression among your customers. In today's competitive market, a great branding strategy will help ensure that customers remember your business as the "go-to" source for their needs.

A branding strategy includes your company's name, logo, symbols, Web site, and other tools that define your small business in the minds of consumers and, perhaps more importantly, differentiates it from others providing the same products or services in your target market. According to marketing experts such as Laura Ries, president of the Atlanta-based Ries & Ries marketing firm, branding and marketing go hand-in-hand.

"If you can build a powerful brand, you will have a powerful marketing program," Ries says. "If you can't, then all the advertising, fancy packaging, sales promotions and PR in the world won't help you succeed."

Almost anything can be branded, including you. But branding is complex and involves the customer's total experience with you, your product or your service. The most effective branding combines both online and off-line elements. The Web offers tremendous opportunities for promoting your brand, through low-cost search engine ads or interactive features on your Web site.

Keep in mind that the best brands tend to tap emotions and appeal to a person's natural need for involvement. Be original in identifying your brand identity -- the thing that truly sets your small business apart. Everybody touts quality and service, for example, so look for something that's really different. If you are having trouble pinpointing a branding message, try asking your customers what they need from you the most. Then base your brand on that.

Your brand should also last a long time, so avoid elements or catch phrases linked to trends likely to disappear or become outdated. Simplicity is also a virtue in your branding message. Buyers are overwhelmed by excess information. Too much information confuses your brand message.

A number of resources can help you understand and craft a sound

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Counselors to America's Small Business

#### Is Social Media a Fad?

Watch this short video to appreciate why social media is being called the biggest shift since the Industrial Revolution. Then think about all the ways your business can profit without spending a fortune.

[Check It Out](#)

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#### Free Counseling

Click any link below to sign up for free counseling at that location. Seek help as many times as you like.

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branding strategy, including:

*The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding* by market guru Al Ries and daughter Laura, this smart and accessible book includes 11 Immutable Laws of Internet Branding. Peter Montoya's *The Brand Called You* offers ideas and advice on how entrepreneurs can promote themselves, personally, as a brand. Australian branding expert Martin Lindstrom also offers an extensive library of branding articles on his Web site, [www.martinlindstrom.com](http://www.martinlindstrom.com).

To learn more about branding and other marketing matters for your business, contact America's free and confidential source of small business mentoring and coaching. SCORE is a nonprofit association of more than 12,000 business experts who volunteer as mentors.

Affiliated with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Fox Valley Chapter of SCORE has counselors available in nine locations in the counties and suburbs west of Chicago.

To sign up for a free appointment at the location closest to you, go to [ScoreFoxValley.org](http://ScoreFoxValley.org).

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Let us help you assess the strengths and weaknesses of your brand, as you develop your marketing strategy around it.

Sincerely,

*The Counselors at SCORE*

*For evening hours,  
see Naperville.*



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## Legal Corner

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### Good Faith in Contracts

Good faith and fair dealing are implied in contracts, even if not explicitly stated. This means, for example, that a customer cannot be arbitrary when rejecting the work or product of a vendor.

Details at  
[www.poznaklaw.com/  
articles/goodfaith.html](http://www.poznaklaw.com/articles/goodfaith.html)

## Summer School Is in Session with June Workshops.

Take advantage of low cost, half-day workshops on many topics, including:

- Accounting
- Constant Contact
- Business Start-Up
- Marketing
- Social Networking
- Franchising
- Quick Books
- Cash Flow Analysis
- Legal Concerns
- Financial Statements
- Advertising with Videos

Locations include College of DuPage in Lisle, McHenry Community College, Waubensee Community College in Aurora, Joliet Junior College, and Elgin Community College.

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