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Basic building blocks of your brand

When a customer needs work completed on their home or business, they'll look for a contractor and decide who to hire. Will they hire you?

Here's a wake-up call for most contractors: your brand tells your customer whether or not they should hire you.

A brand is made up of a number of factors, but let's start with the most obvious — your company name, colors, logo and slogan. These simple building blocks of a brand can actually help or hurt your customer acquisition.

In this article, you'll read about how to look closely at your brand and determine whether it's helping you or hurting you, and we'll ask a series of questions to help you examine your brand more closely and decide if your brand is working for you.

3 Key brand questions to ask

When customers want to hire a contractor, they're looking for a certain combination of qualities: some are looking for integrity and trustworthiness, others are looking for the cheapest service possible, others want speed, others want to know that your workmanship will last for years. There are other qualities as well and every customer has their own preferred mix of these qualities.

So the first question you need to ask is: what qualities do our best customers look for? For example, maybe your best customers aren't looking for the

cheapest service; perhaps they're looking for integrity and workmanship. You need to first figure out who you want as customers and figure out what qualities they look for in a contractor.

When you know this answer, you can create a new brand or adjust an existing

to the first one.

And now it's time to think about the future. So the third question you need to ask is: how do we want to grow? Some contractors are fine building a trusted local business that they can pass down to their children, while others want to build a

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brand to encourage the right customers to hire you and the wrong customers to avoid you.

Once you have that small list of qualities (probably two or three at most), then it's time to look at your brand itself.

So the second question you need to ask is: does our brand reflect the qualities that our best customers are looking for? This is where it gets challenging for contractors who realize that their brand doesn't communicate that information.

Building from the example earlier: if a customer is looking for integrity and workmanship, which contractor are they more likely going to hire — company called Integrity Contracting (with the slogan, "serving customers since 1965") or a company called John Smith Contracting (with the slogan, "affordable contracting services")? Of course they'd respond more positively

large company that they hope to expand.

There's nothing wrong with either approach, but this too should be communicated in your brand. If your brand is John Smith and Sons Contracting (with the slogan, "serving the town of Springfield") then you get an idea of what this company's goal is, versus a company called National Contracting Services (with the slogan, "The name that Americans trust for contracting service").

If you want to own a massive national contracting business someday then build the brand for it right now. If you want to be a Fortune 500 brand in a few years, create that brand right now, even if you only have two customers.

Making changes to your brand

Most contractors don't want to spend a lot of time on their brand. They'd

rather put something on the side of their truck and then get out into the field and start serving customers. But customers aren't industry experts and they don't know what you can or can't do, or whether one contractor or another is the best one to hire.

So you can help to guide the decision of these prospective customers, and ensure that you are hired by more of the right customers (and not hired by the wrong ones!) by building a brand that communicates in the right way.

Decide what kind of customers you want to attract and how you want to grow your business, and then you need to create a brand that tells the world you're on the way.

Once you've examined your brand from these angles, you may find yourself applying certain tweaks to your brand to ensure that you're communicating most effectively to the right customers — to communicate specific qualities and to position your company for the future. **E**

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PMI seeks to understand if lower flow rates impact public health

ROLLING MEADOWS, ILL. — Little scientific research exists on the relationship between low flow rates and opportunistic waterborne pathogens in plumbing systems. That's why Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI) today announced a request for proposal for a test protocol and budget—due Aug. 26, 2016—supporting research that examines whether the trend toward the ongoing lowering of flow rates in plumbing systems create unintended consequences on potable water quality.

"Without much empirical data to date, there isn't a definition for what constitutes 'safe' flow rates in relation

to opportunistic pathogen growth, which may put the public at risk," said Matt Sigler, technical director at PMI. "PMI is looking to select a thoughtful research proposal and ultimately an experiment that addresses water quality impacts due to flow rates."

Through the study, PMI will test the hypothesis that low flow rates yield a greater proliferation of opportunistic pathogens in potable water and create unsafe conditions. Potable water should be satisfactory for drinking and for culinary and domestic uses.

As part of the request for proposal, respondents need to provide a well-defined experiment protocol

with budget requirements. The experiment should be simple, reproducible and run long enough to achieve a steady state, with both controlled water source chemistry and a controlled source of opportunistic pathogens. Flow rate ranges should also represent the minimum and maximum levels typical to premise plumbing systems. Other required proposal elements include showing:

- Measured test parameter data logged over the life of the project.
- Influent and effluent sampling of water at prescribed intervals.
- Biofilm sampling at prescribed location and times during the testing.

● Project report including the charted data, a description of any anomalies observed during the testing and a summary of the findings versus the original hypothesis.

Proposals are due by Aug. 26, 2016, at 5:00 p.m. CDT. Submissions should be addressed to Matt Sigler, technical director at PMI, and sent to msigler@safeplumbing.org. More information about the request for proposal is available at <https://www.safeplumbing.org/news/blog/article/pmi-research-project-request-for-proposal-flow-rate-and-pathogen-growth>. Questions should be directed to Mr. Sigler at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline. **E**