

HOME BUSINESS

HOME BUSINESS®
START-UP GUIDE

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MARKETING & SALES

Marketing MATERIALS on a Shoestring

Where To Spend Your Money if You Don't Have Much To Spend

By Susan Ethier

Today's home-based businesses offer an incredible level of skills, quality experience, and creativity to consumers and companies in a variety of industries. But they often face one hurdle – they don't have the funding that their larger competitors do.

The good news is that small and home-based businesses can compete on the same level with large companies, and they can do it without spending all their money. They simply need one thing – a professional corporate identity.

After creating an infrastructure that allows you to deliver quality goods and services on time to your target market, your marketing efforts should be focused on creating a professional corporate identity for your home-based business.

CORPORATE IDENTITY DEFINED

Your corporate identity consists of the following three elements:

- Company name
- Company logo or unique mark
- Tagline or position statement

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Business owners make decisions about typeface, colors, paper and overall look when creating their identity. These details help to deliver your desired image.

This identity appears on anything that leaves your home-based business, including your business cards, letterhead and envelopes, notecards, web site, brochures, direct mail postcards, ads and more.

WHY IS A CORPORATE IDENTITY SO IMPORTANT?

A professional corporate identity communicates to the world that you mean business. It allows you to enter the marketplace with a

splash and create immediate demand for your products and services. Everything you do to market your business should stem from a strong corporate identity.

If you neglect to create and communicate a professional corporate identity when you start your business, it becomes difficult – and more expensive – to go back and fix it later. Too often, a small business considers its image after the fact. The owner starts the business, begins networking, realizes so-so results, and never imagines that a shabby corporate image – or lack of one – could be holding back the business.

Your corporate identity is the visual interpretation of the value you offer to your customers. It helps establish a professional graphic standard for your business and provides a powerful, memorable, unified image of what it stands for.

Consider the impression you want people to have of your company. Most of us want to project an image of excellence and the capability to deliver on our promises. Often, home-based businesses want to project an image of being larger than they are so they can compete for business with bigger firms. Developing a corporate identity is the first step to achieving this.

Successful home-based businesses consider their corporate identity an investment in their company's success instead of an expense. They maximize the money they spend on their corporate identity by communicating it consistently to create and sustain a strong brand image among their target market.

YOUR BUSINESS CARD, BROCHURE AND OTHER MARKETING MATERIALS

After you create a corporate image for your new business, you're ready to use it on your marketing materials. As a start-up home-based business, you'll want to ensure that you leverage every marketing piece you do to maximize your investment.

Business Card

Start with your business card. By thinking of this piece as a mini-brochure, you'll be sure

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to leverage its power. For example, you’ll get maximum extra exposure at minimal extra cost when you print on both sides of your business card. Here are some things that your business card should include:

- **Your corporate identity.** Provide your company name, logo, and tagline/position statement.
- **Your mailing address and email address.** While email is a primary mode of communication for millions of Americans, many still use the U.S. Postal Service, so your physical mailing address is a necessity. For home-based businesses, consider getting a P.O. Box if you don’t want to publicize your personal information. If you use your street address, consider adding a Suite number, i.e. 154 Maple Lane, Suite 2, to give the impression of a commercial location (the mail carrier will still know it’s you!). If you do not have a website yet – this is another marketing investment that home-based businesses should consider as soon as they can afford it – create a professional email address that uses your company name. Avoid yahoo, hotmail or other email addresses that can make you look like an amateur. SandraCook@thebetter-bookkeeper.com, for example, is more professional.
- **Your phone numbers and fax number.** Get a separate phone line for your business if possible and create a professional voice mail greeting. If you’d rather people not be able to track you down on your cell phone day or night, consider leaving this information off your business card.
- **A list of your services.** Your prospects and customers collect a lot of business cards. In six months, when they pick up your card, will they be able to see easily what you do? If you provide a listing, they will.

Company Brochure

Most start-up companies want to create a company brochure to market their business. In many cases, it’s a great idea. But for some home-based businesses, a different medium may be more appropriate. A professional looking folder that you can customize by inserting individual sales sheets and other marketing materials (press releases, news clippings, etc.) may be a better option.

If you decide that a printed brochure is for you, the key to success is leveraging its use. Choose a format that can serve double duty, as

a standalone direct mail piece or as a marketing piece you can bring on sales calls and to trade shows. By reserving one panel of the brochure as a self-mailer, you expand your opportunities for using the brochure and therefore maximize your investment.

Here are some things that your corporate brochure (or folder and sales sheets) should always include:

- **Your corporate identity** – company name, logo, and tagline/position statement.
- **Information on the value you provide** – how are customers better off after doing business with you? Your value proposition serves to distinguish you from the competition.
- **Information on your company** – products and services offered, company background, hours of operation, contact information.
- **A visually appealing layout** that is consistent with your corporate identity.
- **Easy-to-read, compelling copy** that engages readers.
- **A clear call to action** – what do you want people to do after reading the brochure?

With every marketing piece you send or give to someone, make sure to follow up. Mailing a brochure is a great way to warm up a cold call you make a few days later. Once you’re sure your prospects have received it, simply call them to ask for an appointment to further explain how you may help them.

Other Shoestring Marketing Materials

A home-based business has other marketing material options. These include an oversized postcard, perfect for announcing a new business or advertising a special offer; data sheets that allow for greater level of detail about your products or services; and electronic newsletters to stay in front of your target market on a regular basis without the cost of printing or postage.

Preprinted shells are a particularly good tool for small businesses. They allow you to imprint your company’s most up-to-date and customized information off your own office printer while still delivering a professional and consistent corporate identity.

The success of the pieces begins with a strong corporate identity. Then you can build on it by creating professional pieces and leveraging their use to maximize your investment.

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A Great Company Logo

Think of Google, Apple, and Nike. These companies have great logos, and your home-based business can, too.

Great logos can be font-based, created with a unique type treatment of your company name, or graphic, incorporating an abstract or literal graphic or mark that represents your company. When you start to develop your corporate identity, consider the following characteristics to ensure you create a great one:

- **Practical** – works in print and on line and can be used small or large, black and white or color.
- **Distinctive** – creates a memorable, positive impression and a unique look and feel for your business.
- **Focused** – speaks to your specific target market, whether they are professional, casual, sporty, crafty, young or old.
- **Consistent** – all materials with your logo on it look like they come from the same company because the logo is used appropriately.