

The Importance of Being (Looking) Big

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Do you remember being a small child and how you couldn't wait to be "big"? Everything good, it seemed happened to those who were bigger. You stood on tip-toe and wore you parent's shoes, and you were "almost 7" when you had just turned 6. The same sentiments hold true in business. Bigger, it seems, is better. But is it? Or is it just a matter of perception? Can you appear big without actually being big? Of course you can; it's all about how you market your company and your products.

As a marketing consultant, I ask my clients to do a self-evaluation of their current marketing efforts. This includes an analysis of their larger competitors' image and marketing effectiveness. What kind of marketing do the "big" companies do? What is different about your marketing? Make a list of the ways their marketing inspires confidence. Is it more glossy, polished, edgy, professional, or technical? How do your marketing efforts compare? What needs to change?

The next thing I do is remind my clients that they can do the same – for a lot less money. Big budgets don't always translate to big results. By starting with a vision of how they want to be perceived by the marketplace, they can begin to develop an image that conveys that message. Any amount of money applied with the proper amount of leverage can yield dramatic results.

There are a number of very clever ways to make your company appear big.

- Invest in a solid corporate image – You need to create a cohesive and consistent message and look. Your website, business cards, and marketing materials should all have the same look and feel.
- Don't scrimp on design – A good graphic artist can mean the difference between so-so and oh-wow.
- Hire a good photographer – High quality images of your products are important, especially if you create a catalog.
- Develop opportunities for product placement or celebrity endorsements – There are numbers of ways to get your product or company name in front of large audiences, for a fraction of the cost of an advertising campaign. Hire a firm to explore the opportunities.
- Contact editors of trade publications – Smaller or start-up publications may offer more opportunities. Check the editorial calendar and offer to provide content relevant to the focus of a particular issue.
- Build your credentials – Join or participate in trade associations. There are numerous opportunities to speak at conferences or submit articles for newsletters or other publications.
- Self-promotion – Order reprints of published articles and be sure to add links on your website.
- Strategic outsourcing – If your budget does not allow for a full-time person in a critical position, consider hiring high caliber freelancers on retainer or contract for a specified number of hours.
- Use statistics to your benefit – You may not be the largest, but you may be the fastest growing, or number one in customer service. Always know where you stand relative to your competitors.

The most important thing to remember is that in spite of all the hype, bigger is not always better. Recognize the advantages that being smaller have and develop those attributes as your strengths. Being smaller may allow you to know your customers better, be more responsive, be more creative, or be more focused.

In the words of the famous philosopher, Yoda, "Size matters not. Look at me. Judge me by my size, do you? Hmm? Hmm. And well you should not." Your mission is to ensure your prospects get the message.