

Four Ways to Keep Tabs on Your Brand Perception

Building your brand involves time and energy, and should focus on the **core values of your firm**. These can be found by interviews with key personnel and clients, along with looking at the goals of the firm's founders. This should take you in the right direction toward what you should convey to people inside and outside your firm, telling them who you are and what you have to offer, which effectively builds your brand.

Should you take into account how your brand is perceived by clients and prospects? Absolutely. It may differ from what you convey through your messaging, so you need to know about it. That public perception may derail your branding goals if you don't adjust for it.

Presenting your brand

How you present your firm sets the direction for building your brand. This involves consistent messaging through proper use of your logo, visual imagery, the tone and voice in any written content, and how you present your brand through social, digital and print avenues.

As marketers, it's our responsibility to help you build your brand and send it out into the world based on the values we have identified and developed into a **brand style guide**. Your brand perception allows you to build and cultivate relationships with both new and existing clients. But brand perception is tricky, as pointed out by **Brandwatch**. Consumers heavily influence this perception through the ever-growing number of social media platforms and review sites, as well as old-fashioned word of mouth.

Understanding the perception

Based on research, 45 percent of your brand perception is based on the messages you send out. The other 55 percent is based on what clients think about their interactions with your firm and what they actually say about your brand.

Having a positive brand perception means clients or prospects are more likely to choose you over another service firm. A negative brand perception will have the opposite effect: It will push them away, with the obvious impact on your bottom line.

Service firms often assume they know how their clients feel about them based on daily interactions. This can inflate their brand perception to something more positive than it really is. We may know what our clients really think because:

- Most people don't like delivering bad news.



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- Many clients may quietly walk away after an experience that's less than positive and not inform you about what's bothering them.

That's why it's important to take additional steps to measure your brand beyond client interactions and get an honest look at how your brand is perceived outside the walls of your business.

Measuring brand perception

You have to pay attention to what is being said and written to determine what clients are thinking and measure how your brand is perceived. In the ever-expanding world of social sites, you can't search out everything that is discussed about your firm, but you have a number of options to help you identify what is being posted.

1. Sign up for Google Alerts

Google is a powerhouse of information. If you're not using Alerts, you should. If you don't have an account, signing up is easy and free. Once you have an account, you can then set up the necessary keywords, such as your firm/company name, and Google will monitor it for you. Any time your keywords appear, Google will send you an alert by email and direct you to the web page that references your keywords.

2. Read your online reviews

Online reviews carry a lot of weight, and people are relying on them more than any other source before making decisions. Understanding how people are discussing your brand allows you to and improve your brand perception as needed. This brings us back to Google Alerts. By getting these alerts, you can review and respond to both positive and negative reviews in a timely manner.

3. Follow social media posts

Social media is another big player in brand perception. In an instant, one small crisis can turn into a social media firestorm. You may recall the . This was not a real crisis, but it required a quick response from the makers of Crock-Pot to calm the storm the show created. By monitoring and responding to posts on social media, you can douse that smoldering fire and bring the conversation back to a positive message.

4. Conduct client surveys

Getting feedback from your client through a survey can be an eye-opening experience. You can do a survey online by sending a link in an email or having a designated person – a decision-maker in your firm – make a more-personal one-on-one call. This feedback can give you real insight into what parts of your business are not meeting expectations. Was it the performance of one individual or a lack of response to a phone call? Clients want to feel they are your only priority. While they know you have multiple clients, it is still important to make them feel as if they are the only one when you are talking with them.

Understanding how your brand is perceived need not be a mystery. By monitoring keywords and social media sites, as well as having conversations with your clients, you can gather plenty of information that will tell you whether your perception of your brand aligns with how the people on the outside view your brand. If the perception isn't what you'd like, you can take action to bend it back to the positive direction you want.

How does your brand perception stack up? Reach out to me at asingles@jaffepr.com or

leave a comment below.