



CAPRICORN
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Other resources in step 4a:

- Branding templates
- 'How to' video

The importance of developing and implementing a consistent brand image

Just as it is for big corporations, successful branding is essential to the overall success of any workshop, from a one-man country operation to a large city business.

In any small to medium business, especially in specialist trades, branding is not a high priority. In the case of automotive small businesses, the owner is most of the times busy with their heads under bonnets.

However, if you think of branding simply as creating a highly visual and welcoming atmosphere for your business, you will begin to realise the benefits that can stem from presenting yourself and your business in the best possible way.

Branding can be defined as:

- A collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer.
- A name, sign or symbol which identifies a business's goods or services and differentiates them from a competitor's offerings.
- The sum total of the customer experience.
- The ambience which a business can acquire in which customers feel comfortable and in competent hands.

Branding, if implemented with consistency, generates confidence both for the customer and the staff, therefore leading to potentially greater profits.

Water is free, but water in a branded bottle is worth more than petrol. Coffee beans are not that expensive, but put them in a foil bag stamped with a gold emblem and they suddenly double in price. Certain cars have a higher price tag than others simply because of the badge on the front. How often have you heard 'You're paying for the brand?'

The key part of your brand is a quality product. Creating exceptional content is the number one thing.

Branding that works can always be traced to two essentials – a consistent look and a consistent trading routine.

Customers are comfortable with consistency – familiar faces, look and feel about a workshop. You spend time and effort building relationships with your customers and your workshop branding helps maintain and reinforce that relationship as well as assisting with referrals.

Once created and implemented correctly, a good brand can:

Create a memorable business – the clients will want to return. The brand helps to generate customer loyalty.

Confirm credibility – surveys have shown that credibility, not price, is what customers look for in a workshop.

Target the right clients – the image you portray through branding can determine the type, and often the attitude of the customer.

Your branding might be brilliant, but unless you can ensure that you and your staff create a positive experience, back this up with quality processes and follow through with good promotional material you will be doing only half a job.

Your aim is to turn every customer and their vehicle into a walking, talking, mobile advertisement for your workshop and its expertise.

Look at your business. Drive past, walk past, walk in the door as if you were a motorist looking for a competent business, talk to your own staff, look around the waiting room, ask some trusted friends to do the same. You will be amazed at what you see that needs improvement.

Creating a brand which will make you as competitive as any other similar business is, without doubt, the biggest single investment in yourself and your business that you will make.

It is so important to get it right the first time, because if you keep changing your brand or your 'look', or if your 'look' is mixed, or if you don't have one at all, you will just confuse your customers and the public.

Once you've adopted your brand, apply it consistently to every document, the building, your vehicles, your uniforms, your advertising – everything that is visible to the public. Remind yourself that your franchise competitors spend millions developing their brand and image, so you must be prepared to invest what you can to create your own stand-out brand.

Unless you have a finely honed sense of design yourself, the best advice we can give is to seek out external help from a graphic designer. You can look locally or ask questions of business friends.

Another option is available on the special Capricorn/TaT Biz web page www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn, where Orange Dog, a Capricorn design and print supplier that specialises in automotive is offering a range of templates which you can adapt for your own workshop.

If you need help improving or developing your own brand, you'll find a briefing sheet on the website which you can fill in and send to Orange Dog or your preferred graphic designer. A good designer should be able to delve into your business soul and capture in imagery and colour the nature and vibrancy of your workshop.

Your branding image doesn't need to be too elaborate but it does need to be consistent.

You earn reputation by trying to do hard things well.

With any detailed material, like a retail brochure, be clear and keep reminding yourself that the majority of your customers don't know the difference between a CV Boot and an oxygen sensor. Don't use technician jargon – no abbreviations – no acronyms.

Start talking about ECU programming and you've probably lost the customer. Instead, spell it out – the engine control unit is the main computer which determines the amount of fuel, ignition timing and other parameters the engine needs to keep it running smoothly.

Far too many workshops waste large amounts of money and effort trying to force feed, or buy their brand through paid advertising. By all means, use your local newspaper or radio station to deliver special messages to your public, but don't succumb to impromptu calls from sales people with special deals, or supplements. If you must advertise, stand alone, be unique and make sure you have something powerful to say. Only you must select your media and control the budget, not the advertising salesperson.

Some of the best and busiest restaurants in the world are in back streets and they rarely advertise. They build their brands and their reputations on the standard of their food, service, ambience, wine list and value for money.

You can do the same. The best branding results from what people are saying about you, not what you're saying about yourself.

Your customers will do your advertising for you if you deliver great service, you demonstrate great product knowledge and by your actions and words, they are convinced that your workshop can solve their problems.

The price rarely has anything to do with their purchase decisions.

Your customers will determine what your brand means and what it is worth. Set the image high and watch as your customers lift their own expectations of the value of your services.

As a service to Capricorn members, TaT Biz has prepared a range of ideas and templates to help you on the way to branding and image building for your own business.

Go to www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn, and login to find these aids and view videos which help explain 'how to'.

To help even further, the Capricorn Approved Supplier Orange Dog, which are specialist printers and marketing providers to the automotive repair industry, have developed a full range of templates for point of sale materials which they can adapt to your chosen brand image.

Orange Dog is offering Capricorn members 100 free lube stickers with no strings attached. There are samples on our web page. You can place an order with them, they will send you a proof to OK and send you the stickers free of charge. It's a good way to get started on your path to a consistent brand image.

You'll find a complete kit of matching point of sale materials on the website, from business cards to floor mats, invoices and brochures.

So here's the challenge. In the next four weeks, give yourself a target to develop your brand image and start assembling your distinctive point of sale materials to boost your market presence and your business profitability.

The place to start is www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn.

Just go for it!