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Question of the Month: Is it time to upgrade your brand image? Take advantage of the power of visual communication

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In today's competitive retail environment, the strength and relevance of your brand image is more important than ever. Signage plays a major role in your business, and many retailers fail to take advantage of the power of visual communications to build their bottom line. Keeping your image fresh, bright and eye catching will attract new business and provide potential and existing customers with confidence in your brand.

Building your brand is more than just getting your target market to choose you over the competition. It is about getting your prospects and customers to see you are the only one that provides a solution to their problem. A brand is not what you tell your customers about your company, it is what they perceive of it. It is what they say and feel about your company. With this in mind, your reputation is on the line every time they experience your brand.

While installing a new sign may not change the way your customers feel about you, creating an effective signage solution may be the first step in an overall business strategy that conveys a clear message of what your customers will experience interacting with you. Well-branded signage is the most effective and strongest way to increase your brand recognition, often more important than traditional print and other media in the retail environment.

There is virtually no limit to what a good signage program can do for your business. When considering different signage options, keep these tips in mind:

- * Keep it consistent, visible and legible - Your sign is your "first impression" and it must project the positive image you want the public to have of your business. Make your signage stand out with the use of contrasting colors, architectural elements, and full color digital graphics. Also remember to integrate your creative and message across all marketing channels.

- * Tell your own unique story - Another successful way to build your retail brand is to tell a story with your signs. In order to come up with signage that really hits the mark in this respect, just think about who your clients, visitors, and customers are. Also consider what it is that they value about your company and what it is that they like about the products and services that you offer them. This is how to keep your brand alive and flourishing.

- * Design - The most important factor in an effective sign is design. Your design must make a powerful statement. A design that can be read and understood with just a quick glance will create the most effective sign. Keep it simple.

The effects of visually appealing signage, gives retailers the opportunity to improve their customer's shopping experience. The importance of creating customer experiences in the retail environment has been proven to influence consumer decision-making at the point of sale, as well as helping to enforce branding and enriching the overall shopping experience. Keep in mind that your brand

identity should remain consistent to reinforce your values continually. Ensure all of your communications - including your signage - are consistent with your brand.

What does your signage say about your brand? If your sign is outdated and in need of a makeover, you may be sending out the wrong message to your customers, one that says your brand, your business, your shopping center is outdated, tired and irrelevant. Don't let your signage send out a message that you're not proud of. Building your brand, builds your business. Is it time to upgrade your brand image?

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