

Branding Your Marketing Concepts

By **Michael Neidle**



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Overview

During periods of tight budgets and economic pressures, businesses try to get their suppliers, certainly staffing companies in-

cluded, to lower their prices. This makes sense when their suppliers' services are essentially the same, or in essence commodities. Where the services of the supplier are distinct, it does not make sense to make a decision simply on price alone. If a business does, it may very well result in higher costs over the long haul.

The problem for the supplier is to first differentiate their services from their competitors and then demonstrate why the client would be better off by using him as their supplier. Differentiating one's services are not always easy, but with a bit of effort one can often convert a commodity service into a proprietary offering. When these services can further save the client money, they may be able to create a real competitive advantage. The next step is to create an identity for one's creation through branding and copyrighting where appropriate.

Staffing companies need to implement the above steps for their customers. Our clients often create their own unique set of features and functions for their customers as a routine part of their marketing program, to avoid competing on price. Most successful companies in any industry employ a similar strategy.

Design and Branding

What can staffing companies do to create a distinct and unique offering? Clearly, they need to set themselves apart from the competition with plainly discernable advantages. These advantages can be in the form of either higher quality or

lower price. We will concentrate on the former with an example of how higher quality service can be delivered via a family of value added features.

KwalityPlus® is a modified version of actual programs that have been designed for our clients. It incorporates a customized set of modules specifically designed to meet and exceed their customer's needs. Other features can be substituted in this module for different staffing company services. The logo was trademarked and the name and various modules were copyrighted.

provided within this module, including: hiring trends, compensation surveys, staffing changes at select competitors, legislative initiatives, etc. The staffing company in effect becomes an extension of their client's HR department. General information is provided via an e-mail newsletter; proprietary information is provided individually.

• Profit improvement program:

Provides the client with value added staffing services, including: project solutions, profit sharing programs, full service staffing, VMS and related services. Value added



Description of Features

• Strategic staffing assessment:

Provides the client with important staffing trends and market intelligence. Over a dozen services are

services go beyond traditional recruiting and provide a discernable benefit to the client beyond the industry norm. Which services you provide depend on market opportunities and your capabilities. This

may be as simple as providing extended credit terms at no interest. Profit sharing programs may range from recruiting lower priced people, to project solution programs, where any savings generated are divided between the client and vendor.

- **Customized reports:** Provides a set of reports defined by the client and staffing company working together. These reports typically include: staffing service responsiveness, staff turnover, cost/benefit analysis, recruiting efficiency, profitability analysis, VMS tracking, etc. Pricing would vary according to the amount of customization that is required.

- **Employee retention program:** It would be extremely helpful to demonstrate that the staffing company is not simply interested in benefiting from client turnover, but is concerned about the client's performance and provides an ongoing employee retention program to minimize turnover. A sample of activities would include: conducting salary negotiations, dispute mediation and arbitration, performance improvement programs' etc.

- **Service continuum:** This defines the full range of services that are provided by the staffing company. One client trademarked this as their "Around the Clock Service Continuum", which ranged from: the identification of most qualified

applicants and value added service to pre-offer reference check and post offer validation of employment.

- **Training workshops:** Provides in-house training workshops. Examples include: primer for new employees, enhancing communication skills, handling confidential information, technical training classes, etc. The staffing company may provide this service internally or contract this activity via an outside trainer. Fees range from just covering costs to being a profit center. The former may make sense from a marketing standpoint, as these workshops can be used to attract new clients.

- **Proprietary screening matrix:** Provides a broad spectrum of screening devices to match the candidate with the company. Examples include: matching the candidate's interpersonal skills vs. the corporate culture, matching the candidate's financial requirements vs. the fit with the company's compensation range, etc.

- **Performance guarantee:** Provides certain guarantees for services provided. This may include: free replacement for direct hires that are terminated for any reason within 30 days, reimbursement of fee paid for temps who do not meet the client's standards, liability coverage, damage limitations, guarantee of the quality of

work performed, etc.

Marketing

With the completion of design and branding process, the next step is to capitalize on what has been created with a well designed marketing program to generate new business. This involves getting the message out to prospective clients and providing sufficient information about your services to the intended audience.

Marketing programs can be rather expensive, but trying to establish oneself within a niche market is far less expensive than in reaching mass consumer markets. Nevertheless, this program can be a rather expensive process when conducted through traditional advertising channels such as print ads, Internet ads, trade shows, mass mailings, promotional literature, etc. It is possible to do this at a more reasonable price via a well thought out e-commerce program, augmented with a smaller traditional marketing budget. ■

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