

## **BrandZone: How to Make Marketing Communications Work for Your Small Business**

**A Special Report by Meyer Baron**

**President, 1SmartPuppy**



Published by 1SmartPuppy, Inc.  
3209 58<sup>th</sup> St. S. #228  
Gulfport, FL 33707  
727-235-2841 (Tampa Bay)  
1-888-879-2841 (Toll Free)

© 2004, Meyer Baron, All rights reserved.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
I. Seven Key Principles of Small Business Marketing .....	4
1. Successful marketers conquer “Consideration Sets” .....	4
2. Your brand is the starting point of all your marketing communications.....	4
3. Building a small business brand begins with the entrepreneur’s values and beliefs .....	5
4. People make purchase decisions emotionally and then justify those decisions rationally..	5
5. Only that which is unique is worth marketing .....	6
6. Move people up the prospect ladder to earn customers, loyalty, and referrals .....	6
7. Create your messages to accomplish specific goals.....	6
II. BrandZone Organization: Winning the Marketing Con Game .....	7
Content .....	7
Context .....	8
Concept .....	8
Contact .....	8
Connect .....	8
III. The BrandZone Process.....	9
Step 1: Discovery.....	9
Step 2: Research & Analysis.....	9
Step 3: Building the Brand Strategy .....	10
Step 4: Planning .....	10
In Closing.....	11

## ***Introduction***

The BrandZone system for building brands and planning advertising, direct marketing, and public relations was born in 2001 from more than a decade of helping entrepreneurs promote their products and services. Its purpose is to help a small businesses use marketing communications to build a strong, relevant brand and to acquire and retain customers more efficiently and effectively.

That's how it's worked for our clients, all of which are small businesses.

This special report is divided into three sections.

To help you understand why BrandZone works, we'll begin with the Seven Key Principles of Small Business Marketing. Some of these principles I learned by trial and error, some by independent study, and others from the Interactive Marketing Institute of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business. As far as I know, they've never before been presented as a set of guiding principles. Frankly, I don't know how businesses succeed without them. If you feel the same way after reading them, feel free to copy the Seven Key Principles and distribute them to key personnel in your business.

The second section illustrates how a BrandZone is organized to be simple to understand and easy to update. This straightforward and flexible organization makes a BrandZone a viable system that can evolve as the business grows.

The third section lays out the process of developing a BrandZone. If you decide to undertake developing a BrandZone on your own, you'll find this section helpful. If you're considering having 1SmartPuppy develop a BrandZone for you, this section will tell you how we would go about it.

Throughout my career, I've tried to learn how successful big businesses do things and then scale those methods appropriately for small businesses. In some cases, relevant adaptation required more than simple scaling. As you will see, the BrandZone itself is the most significant case where simply scaling a big business system was not enough.

As an entrepreneur myself, I hope this special report will dramatically change the way you think using marketing communications, and that you'll call 1SmartPuppy and invite us to develop a BrandZone for your company. As a writer and a marketing professional, I trust you will consider your time with this special report very well spent. Please share your reaction with me by emailing [meyer@1SmartPuppy.com](mailto:meyer@1SmartPuppy.com)

Meyer Baron  
October, 2004

## ***1. Seven Key Principles of Small Business Marketing***

These principles are the glue that holds the BrandZone system together.

### **1. Successful marketers conquer “Consideration Sets”**

Imagine that whenever you think about buying something, a thought bubble forms above your head, just like the ones you see in cartoons. In that thought bubble are all of the messages you’ve taken in about the various products or services you know about that might address your need. These messages may have come from advertising, direct marketing, public relations, word of mouth, or your own experiences with the companies whose messages are in your thought bubble. That thought bubble is your “consideration set” as you begin shopping, and the messages inside represent the options you will consider.

Chances are, you received other messages from other companies as well, but for some reason they were irrelevant to you and did not make it “in there,” into your consideration set.

As a marketer, your target is not your prospects’ eyeballs, but their consideration set. You can’t be satisfied with “getting your name out there,” you have to get your message “in there.”

You invest in marketing communications for branding, for customer acquisition, and for customer retention. When those three goals are aligned strategically, tactically, and creatively, you have the ability to take up more and more space inside a customer’s consideration set, until you dominate it so thoroughly that you eliminate all others from consideration.

That’s what successful marketers do.

### **2. Your brand is the starting point of all your marketing communications**

The word “brand” is overused so much that you have to ask people what they mean by it.

At 1SmartPuppy, we say that your brand is the expectation you create about what doing business with you will be like. When people receive communications from you or about you, it creates a mental and emotional model, or expectation, of what doing business with you will be like. Your brand should be a relevant, unique, and appropriate expectation that attracts people to your business and keeps them there.

You need that expectation to be in synch with their actual experiences. Your communications (ads, letters, websites, etc.) are all conveyors of the brand. In today’s visual, interactive, short attention span world, names, logos, taglines, and packaging have become essential brand conveyors, but they are not the brand itself. Just as important to the health of your brand are the ways customers are treated in person, over the phone, or via email, and the way your company addresses customers who have had negative experiences. But for your company to be true to its brand consistently, internally and externally, you first have to develop it; then you have to manage it.

That may sound obvious, but most small businesses don’t manage their brands. By that omission, they leave it to their customers and competitors to manage it for them. Instead of creating positive expectations, companies fall victim to the reputation created for them by customers and competitors. The results are predictable; and they’re not pretty.

As the starting point of all your marketing communications, your brand needs to stand up to the rigorous scrutiny of employees, customers, vendors, and competitors. All will test your commitment to your brand.

Your BrandZone will focus on key attributes of your brand and how it should be conveyed outwardly in marketing communications. Thereafter, the first question you will ask regarding any proposed marketing concept, strategy, or tactic will be, "Is it consistent with the brand?"

### **3. Building a small business brand begins with the entrepreneur's values and beliefs**

The world of big business has seen a slew of marketing communications models over the years. Sometimes, they seem like the flavor of the month.

But big business brand building models all have one thing in common: they ignore the entrepreneur.

It's not that they don't like the entrepreneur; it's just that in a big business there is no such entity. Instead, there are investors and managers. The companies themselves are marketing entities looking for ways to improve the performance of their brands and to extend brands through new products and new markets.

More often than not, big business brands are personalities made up out of whole cloth to respond to perceived customer need and/or desire. Find a need, create the brand personality to address it, hire the right people to manage the organization and meet the marketing goals. The investors hold the managers accountable for meeting marketing goals. If the goals aren't met, the investors get new managers.

No entrepreneurial small business operates that way. When you don't reach your goals, you can't replace yourself. You also can't develop a brand personality for your business that conflicts with your values and beliefs. Plenty try, but it doesn't work. What happens is that the customers who are attracted by the false expectations of the brand eventually come to realize the difference between what's been promised and what's been delivered. New customer churn drives the business owner crazy or out of business.

Small business brands must reflect the values and beliefs of the entrepreneur.

### **4. People make purchase decisions emotionally and then justify those decisions rationally**

An individual buys something because he or she believes the purchase will in some way make his or her life better. That's true even in the business world. No matter how rational an argument you present for your product or service, if you can't reach people emotionally, you're not communicating.

It's not uncommon for a small business to "advertise" an unappealing list of products or services. We call that "Teeth Marketing." Teeth Marketing is like thinking of your smile as being nothing more than your teeth. Have you ever tried describing your teeth? No matter how you describe them, teeth are boring. And if your smile was nothing more than your teeth, it would not only be boring, it would be pretty tough to look at.

Thank goodness your teeth are framed by your lips. Now, describe your lips. Hopefully, this is a much different and much more interesting story than your description of your teeth. When people talk about your winning smile, chances are it's your lips that are winning them over.

Think of every message you communicate as your company's smile, and make sure you get the lips right.

## 5. Only that which is unique is worth marketing

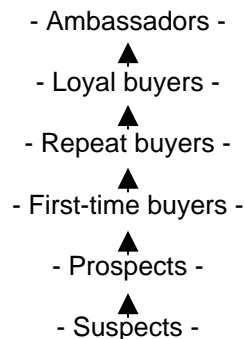
Why spend the money and the effort being a “Me too!” marketer? Unless you have a monopoly on a product or are the first to offer a specific service, the things you sell are probably similar, or maybe even identical, to the things your closest competitors sell.

There must be advantages, actual or perceived, in doing business with you instead of with your competitors. If you don't know what those advantages are, you will be condemned to being the low price solution. That's okay if that's what you want, but small businesses that try to compete on price alone usually end up getting blown out of the marketplace.

Before you start spending money on your advertising, public relations, logo, website, or whatever, make sure you know what unique aspects of your company are worth advertising.

## 6. Move people up the prospect ladder to earn customers, loyalty, and referrals

Segment each of the people you need to reach on the appropriate rung of the prospect ladder.



With proper segmentation, you can develop a consistently relevant program for reaching the right people with the right message. Before you communicate, know which segment you want to reach. Entrepreneurs often make three big mistakes in this regard:

1. Expecting every message to work at all rungs of the ladder
2. Trying to push people too many rungs up the ladder all at once
3. Treating all customers the same

## 7. Create your messages to accomplish specific goals

The overarching goal of any message should have one clear purpose. You have three options:

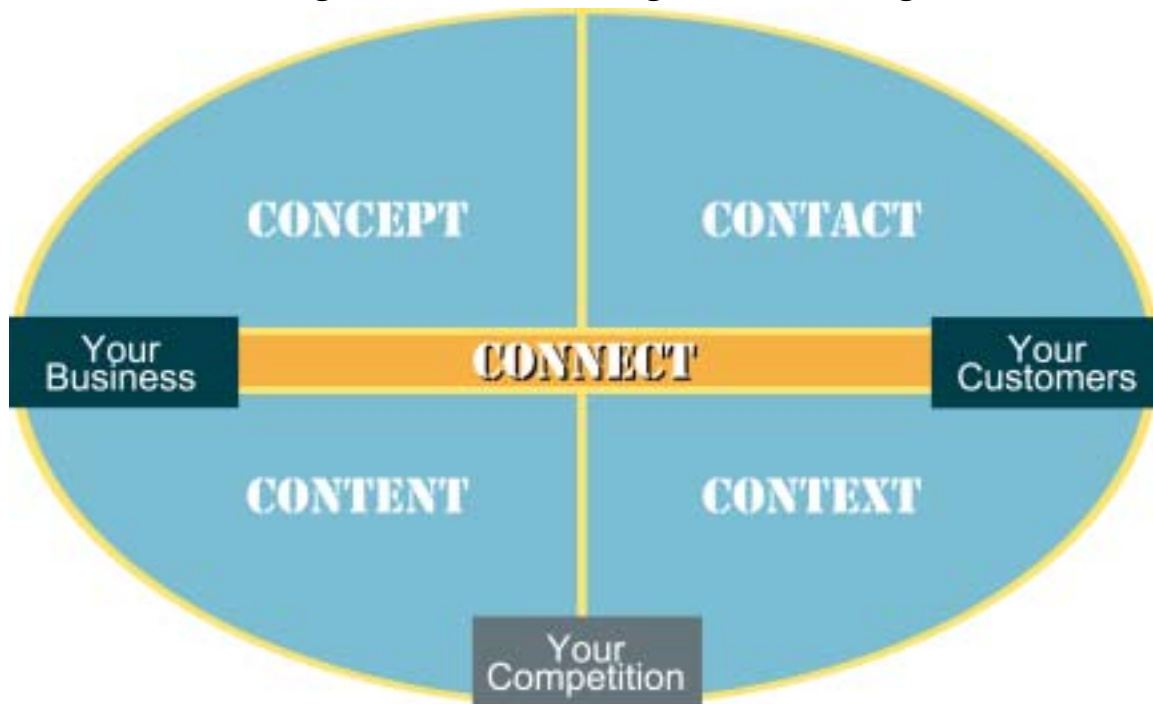
- To generate awareness of your product/services
- To educate about your product/services
- To sell your product/services

Understand how you need to affect your target's behavior. Again, you have three options:

- Introduce new behavior
- Reinforce current behavior
- Change behavior

Once you know what goals you want a message to accomplish, you can craft the content accordingly. What's more, once you know how you want to affect your audience's behavior, you can choose the medium with the appropriate power for delivering the message. Identifying these characteristics beforehand will help ensure both the relevance of the message and the effectiveness of the delivery mechanism. Without this knowledge, you're just guessing.

## II. BrandZone Organization: Winning the Marketing Con Game



To escape the realm of theoretical marketing jargon, and to make it easy for any small business owner to understand and implement their BrandZone, we divide it into sections that resemble a board game. Think of it as the marketing “Con” game. After all, many people think of marketing as a con game. Instead of denying it, BrandZone shows you how to win.

There are three “Players” in the game:

1. Your Business
2. Your Competition
3. Your Customers

The board is divided into the five “Cons:”

1. Content
2. Context
3. Concept
4. Contact
5. Connect

As stated in the first key principle of small business marketing, the goal is to conquer the biggest “Con” of all, the Consideration Sets of your target customers.

As we explain the five Cons, one at a time, you’ll soon see that this board game is really a map of the essential relationships that exist in your marketing communications environment.

### Content

Content comprises the most basic aspects of your business, such as the products and services you offer. On the board, Content is located between Your Business and Your Competition because many of the items listed as your Content are also part of your competitors’ Content. From a marketing perspective, the important items on your content list are those that are unique to your business.

## Context

Context is located between Your Competition and Your Customers, because that is where each element of the Content of your business proves itself to be unique and marketable or irrelevant (from a marketing perspective). Only by learning who Your Customers really are and how Your Competition markets themselves can you craft messages that are sure to score with Your Customers while distinguishing you from Your Competition.

## Concept

Content and Context reveal what is unique about your business, who your target customers are, and what kind of messages are most likely to motivate them to buy.

In Concept, that information is translated into the attributes that will form the backbone of your brand (the starting point of all your marketing communications), the unique benefits that should form the bases of offers, and the key phrases, headlines, images, and colors that will help your messages resonate emotionally with your customers while providing the logical underpinnings they will need to rationalize their decisions to do business with you.

## Contact

Contact focuses on the first two stages of the Prospect Ladder (see the sixth key principle of small business marketing), Suspects and Prospects.

Suspects are people who have no knowledge of your business.

Prospects are those who have never done business with you, but have demonstrated some interest in doing so.

These are the customer acquisition stages.

## Connect

Connecting is about customer loyalty, but it's not about treating all customers the same.

There are four customer segments on the Prospect Ladder:

1. First-time customers
2. Repeat customers
3. Loyal customers
4. Ambassadors

You need to move your customers up the ladder until they become Ambassadors for you.

As the BrandZone game board illustrates, when you use marketing communications properly to Connect with Your Customers, you take control of their Consideration Set and Your Competition drops out of the picture.



Organizing the BrandZone into the Three Players and the Five Cons allows it to remain a vital system even when circumstances and conditions change. All businesses evolve in their own way. Like all systems, a change in one area of your BrandZone will impact others, and the system will need to be updated to remain in balance. By adjusting your BrandZone and keeping it current as your business continues to change, you can assure the freshness and relevance of your brand.

### **III. The BrandZone Process**

This section is going to use the word “we” a lot. That’s because we invented BrandZone for our clients and, as far as we know, 1SmartPuppy is the only company to ever develop a BrandZone for a company. In other words, this section describes the process that we use.

That being said, you are welcome to use all the information in this report to help develop your own BrandZone. We do recommend that you find someone outside your organization to do the work for you, as our clients have told us that it is invaluable to have a third party take a serious look at their organization. If you do develop a BrandZone for your company, please send us a copy so we can learn from your experience.

Every BrandZone is different, and the process that leads to the final BrandZone is slightly different in each case. Regardless of the twists and turns that developing a BrandZone may take, there are always four basic steps: Discovery, Research and Analysis, Building the Brand Strategy, and Planning.

#### **Step 1: Discovery**

As the third principle of small business marketing states, “Creating a relevant brand for a small business begins with the values and beliefs of the entrepreneur.” That’s exactly where BrandZone development begins.

In a 4-5 hour workshop, we delve into your company to discover as much relevant information as possible. With all key decision makers present, we ask a series of approximately 25 questions relating to the company’s core values, product and service offerings, marketing experiences, customers/clients, and competition. All questions (and answers) are projected to facilitate discussion. All input is valued; there are no wrong answers. We also bring a number of images of other successful businesses to determine which of those most closely resemble the way you would like your customers/clients to think of you.

For very small companies that will spend less than \$50,000 a year on marketing, we lower the cost of the BrandZone by replacing the workshop with an in-depth questionnaire.

What makes Discovery different from Research? The information we gather in the Discovery phase is a combination of the entrepreneur’s values and beliefs plus a set of assumptions shared by managers. When we do our Research, we often find that at least some of those assumptions are incorrect.

#### **Step 2: Research & Analysis**

We take a close look at the company, the competition, and the customer base. While each BrandZone is unique, there are certain questions we research and analyze for every BrandZone.

1. What does the particular industry look like in the client’s market?
2. How much competition is there?
3. What positions have the main competitors assumed and how are they appealing to the customer base?
4. Whom should the client be targeting and how are these people similar?
5. How should the client’s existing customer base be segmented?
6. Why are the client’s marketing efforts falling short of the mark?
7. Which features of the company are unique and marketable?

The depth of the research is determined by the needs of the client. Our research may include any and all of the following:

- Client provided sales data
- Competitors ads, PR, and websites
- Trade publications
- US Census Bureau reports
- Available mailing lists
- Direct input by the client's customers

What comes out of this research and analysis is a detailed profile of the customer the client needs to target, based on demographics, customer motivations, and an alignment of values and beliefs shared by those customers and the company. This profile is key to the client developing messages that are relevant, unique, and compelling and delivering those messages to the correct people consistently.

### **Step 3: Building the Brand Strategy**

We use our analysis to develop recommendations for the brand strategy. Recommendations include:

- What to advertise
- Raising the right expectations, both rationally and emotionally
- Identifying the one promise that should be communicated in every message
- Describing the personality of the brand
- Visual and verbal brand associations, including logo recommendations
- Colors to be used
- A positioning statement that asserts the companies unique position in the marketplace while touting its competitive advantages
- A memorable tagline that succinctly clinches the positioning statement
- A review of the client's current marketing materials, comparing them with the recommendations of the BrandZone and specifying what needs to be done to bring them into alignment

### **Step 4: Planning**

The brand strategy is the starting point for planning specific tactics for advertising, direct marketing, and public relations. All communications are planned so that integration takes place in four ways:

1. Consistent branding across all marketing channels
2. Relevant messaging at each level of the prospect ladder from Suspect all the way up to Ambassador, to keep prospects moving up the ladder
3. Appropriate messaging depending on how much the message is intended to build awareness, educate, or sell
4. Selection of distribution method and media for advertising, direct marketing, public relations and the web, depending on the power needed to motivate the customer up to the next rung of the prospect ladder

To help the client accomplish this multi-dimensional integration, we detail how to approach each rung of the prospect ladder separately and make recommendations about how to use each of the marketing channels specified. To tie it all together, we create two tables:

1. An action plan that visually shows how each recommendation moves customers up the prospect ladder
2. A phasing schedule showing the client what to do and when to do it

## ***In Closing***

No system is a silver bullet that will solve all your marketing problems. What a BrandZone can do for your company is show you how to lift itself above the competition, reach the right people with the right messages, and earn customers' loyalty. It's the first step on the road to using marketing communications successfully.

But the benefit of acquiring and retaining customers effectively and efficiently should not overshadow the enormous benefit of building a relevant and powerful brand.

By building and promoting a strong brand instead of just selling products and services, you will make your company more valuable. If that's not of interest to you right now, you might learn a hard lesson when it comes time to sell your business. Buyers are much more willing to pay for a company with a strong brand than one without.

Finally, if this special report has heightened your sense of how your advertising, direct marketing, and public relations campaigns *should* work, imagine how much you have to gain by developing a BrandZone for your business.

1SmartPuppy has developed BrandZones for B2C, B2B, and government clients. While each engagement has been unique, the one consistent circumstance has been the appreciation of the client following the presentation of the findings.

We have a very simple way of determining whether or not our client is happy with the BrandZone. Before we begin, clients give us a 50% non-refundable deposit. After the presentation, if they are not completely satisfied with our work, they can refuse the BrandZone and not pay us a nickel more. Obviously, I'm very glad that hasn't happened. But what it says about their appreciation for the BrandZone is more important.

Once the BrandZone has been presented and accepted, the company has the choice of implementing it internally, turning it over to an outside party to implement, or retaining 1SmartPuppy to retain it for them. No matter which option they choose, their BrandZone becomes their roadmap to marketing success.

If you'd like to put your business on the road to better advertising, direct marketing, and public relations, call me, Meyer Baron, and let's get started. In the Tampa Bay area, call 727-235-2841. The toll-free number is 888-879-2841.

Let's go fetch some customers!