

# A strong business image can breed exceptional results

## Signs of strength

The first - and perhaps only - thing anyone sees of your business is its corporate identity. Think of Body Shop, Esso, The National Lottery or Virgin... logos can become as familiar and powerful as the brand names they represent.

Make no mistake; as long as your corporate emblem is both credible and consistently applied, it has the potential to be a mighty ambassador on your road to success.

Which is where we hit a snag...

A downside of our digital age is that nearly everyone now has a computer - brimming over with choices like typeface, point size, clip-art, print, and email or fax modem. Before megabytes and gigabytes few would have dreamt of entrusting something as important as their corporate identity to D.I.Y. and copier paper. But now, once you can use a few hundred quid's worth of hardware and software, it's very hard not to feel 'creative'. Bish, bash, bosh, you've got a new logo! Big or little; top or bottom; justified or centred; green, black, red or yellow? Who cares, we'll have all of them! And why not?

I'll tell you why not: every time your staff whack out a different style of letterhead, fax cover sheet, memo, leaflet, flyer or brochure you communicate a different message. As you'd expect, consistent repetition of the same identity / message will help build your company's legend; and, by the same token, transmitting a multitude of messages causes havoc and confusion. So, if you were a serious buyer exercising serious choice to spend serious money on a serious business purchase, would you choose to buy from a chaotic and confused company? Of course not!

Julian Childs is the founder of MAINLY MARKETING... ([www.mainlymarketing.co.uk](http://www.mainlymarketing.co.uk)) and CML PROMOTE ([www.cmluk.com/promote.asp](http://www.cmluk.com/promote.asp)) - and also undertakes freelance consultancy for various London and home counties' organisations such as BLINK DESIGN & MEDIA ([www.blinkdesignandmedia.com](http://www.blinkdesignandmedia.com)), BUSINESS FOCUS ([www.business-focus.co.uk](http://www.business-focus.co.uk)) and WORLD WIDE PORTALS ([www.wwp.uk.com](http://www.wwp.uk.com)). You can contact him via any of these sites or by email to [info@mainlymarketing.co.uk](mailto:info@mainlymarketing.co.uk)



Think for a minute just how unique your company is: from more obvious things like the design of your offices and the style of your packaging to - at least as importantly - many rather less tangible aspects like your beliefs, standards and the way you do business. Potentially, a strong sense of corporate identity is the driving force for everyone in your company. It can communicate how you differ from your competitors - and, when taken to the extreme, provides a

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'backbone' for the reputation that delivers your policies through to your customers, City finance and possibly even Government.

To be truly effective your corporate identity should spring from your organisation's roots to reflect its values and behaviour, strengths and weaknesses. Be it deliberate or by default, your logostyle and the way you manage it is a message to the world about your corporate strategy and business competence. You simply cannot afford to bodge it or leave it to chance.

Start by asking your customers - and other key audiences like suppliers, staff and shareholders - whether your existing image looks too cheap, cheerful, run-of-the-mill or old-fashioned (which, of course, is fine if it's where you are and how you want to stay). If so - and I assume you would prefer something different - you will need to commit proper time, thought and money to ensure that your corporate identity accurately represents your business as contemporary, relevant, professional and substantial enough to deserve the orders you are striving for.

Decent graphic design can create a new, strong corporate identity to sell your business even before you do - helping you to bridge the gap between where your business exists today and the ambition you've set for it tomorrow. As always, the choice between cost and investment is yours - but the difference will almost certainly show through in your sales and profitability.