

10

QUICK STEPS

— TO —

Marketing
GENIUS

JACK BURKE

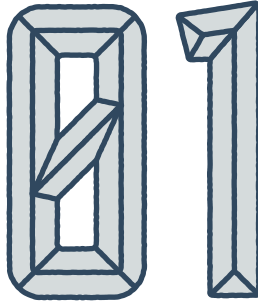


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establish a solid foundation



D E T E R M I N E Y O U R B U S I N E S S ' P U R P O S E

The core foundation of any company begins with its purpose: why the company started, what it will offer, and what consumers can expect. All owners and partners should agree on the SOLE (as well as SOUL) purpose of the business, so everyone stays on the same page. Determining your business' purpose influences how and what you are going to deliver to customers, plus it solidifies business decisions as your company grows. Hiring the right employees, deciding on your market, prospects, and the people you wish to do business with. All this relates to knowing and believing in your purpose.

A company must dig deep to identify its main purpose and how it relates to each owner, employee, and client. Ideally, your purpose should be meaningful and evolve as you gain wisdom and experience. It took me almost two decades to finalize BURKE's main purpose: DISCOVER SIGNIFICANCE. In 2013, after operating a thriving business for years, I wanted to do more than succeed;

I wanted to make the business more relevant, more purposeful. This was when we adopted our Discover Significance precept.

Since then, I have been driven to help clients discern the significance of their businesses, and I extend the message to family and friends. Each time I persuade clients, startups, or associates to acknowledge their gifts, objectives, and how they can make an impact, I'm fulfilling my own company's purpose.

This development of purpose also aids the initiation of creative briefs that steer a project in the right direction. A well-defined purpose is so fundamental; I recommend posting it on the company profile, its website, and throughout the office. For example, in our office, we installed artwork to reinforce our Discover Significance message and remind everyone who visits and works in the office that we know where we're headed and where we want to go.

Once you understand your purpose for doing business, you can formulate a marketing plan of action, as well as your company's vision, mission, and values. By defining these essential messages and making sure they inspire your team members, customers, and vendors, you establish a solid infrastructure from which your business can flourish.

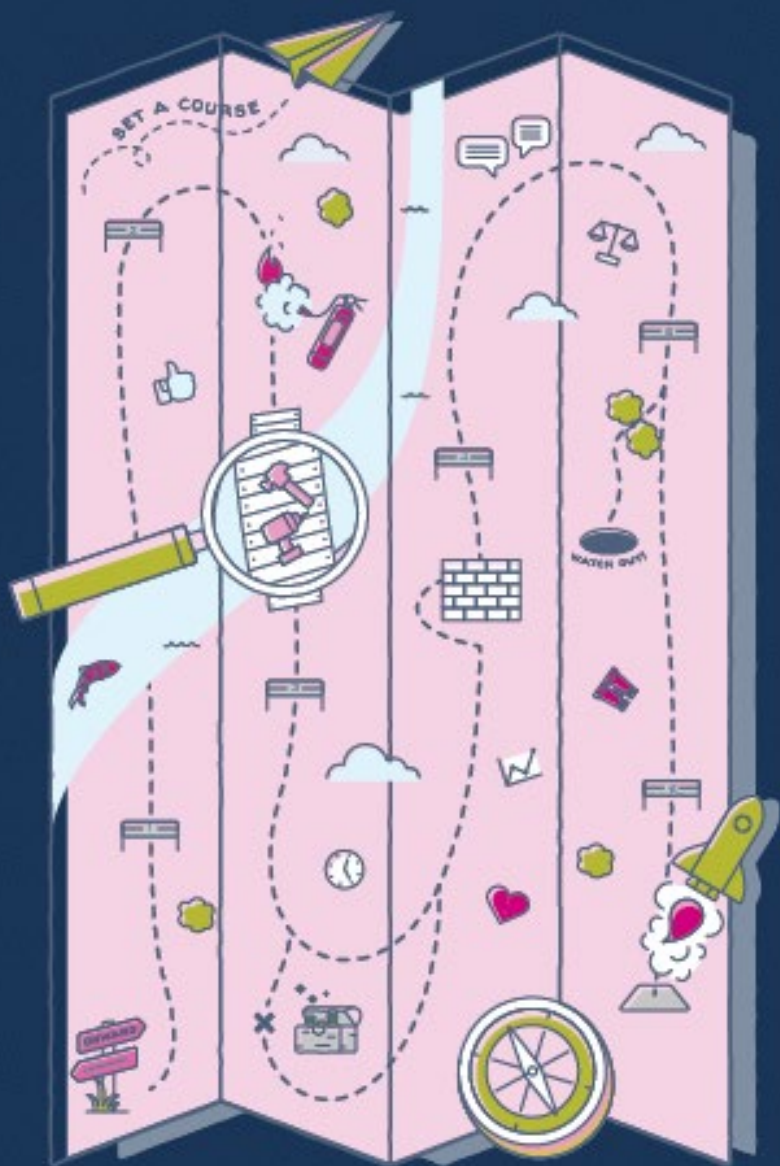
To draft your company purpose, ask these questions about your business and its goals:

- 1) What do I want my business to stand for?
- 2) Why was the business started, and what is its primary goal?
- 3) What do I want the business to be recognized for at the end

of each day?

- 4) What can the business do that is more significant or better than any other?
- 5) What makes the business most successful?

With serious introspection and reflection, the answers to these questions will reveal your purpose and underscore how it fits your long-range objectives. Perhaps share the questions with employees to solicit their feedback and compare their views with your own. Find your purpose, and with hard work and determination, you will triumph.



follow an insightful roadmap

02

DEVELOP A MARKETING PLAN

Just like you need a GPS to get where you're going, your business needs a complete marketing plan to impart direction for at least the first year. And, if feasible, the plan should span three to five years.

A marketing plan identifies your goals so that you can follow an insightful roadmap rather than hastily react to marketing challenges (which, by the way, rarely works). Reactionary marketing relies on the impulse to spend and advertise. Even if you have a multi-million-dollar advertising budget, spending money on ads only takes you so far. In reality, the majority of US businesses are entrepreneurial, providing more than 50% of American jobs and operating with limited marketing budgets. They are compelled to make every single advertising and marketing dollar count. Hence, the value of a strategic plan.

Creating a viable MARKETING PLAN typically requires about three to six months. It involves analyzing strengths and weaknesses

while isolating ways to offset obstacles and set a course for success. At BURKE, I suggest ceasing or minimizing all current marketing efforts as the plan is being conceived; then, implement the plan so you can track its results. Surprisingly, almost 97% of our clients that stopped and/or limited marketing during plan development noticed sales figures barely fluctuated. Why? They had been relying on reactive marketing that had not worked well nor helped the company reach its potential. This epiphany underscored the call for a PROACTIVE marketing plan in the first place.

Altering how businesses operate always presents a challenge. People become content with the status quo, and change precipitates stress. But change, whether starting a new job or launching a new strategic marketing plan with measurable benchmarks, specifies different targets so you can determine whether the plan works. Over our tenure, we've developed hundreds of custom marketing plans and watched our clients soar. The key word here is customization since what works for one company may not work for another. To thoroughly analyze business operations, you need an objective point of view beyond company walls. This is why it's wise to have an outside agency or consultant produce the plan.

Obtaining a third party's perspective of your company and market efforts can be extremely helpful. By being independent of your daily operations, a third-party can examine your business without emotional attachments. Often, internal marketing personnel or owners are too close to the business and its inner workings to foresee alternate marketing options, methods, or ideas. Still, an owner and onsite marketing staff members prove essential to

development of the final plan, as they are the experts in their field and market segment. It takes a TEAM effort to construct an intuitive plan. I know this because I've witnessed the results. Our clients that had not seen their sales budget for years noticed a significant revenue increase once their marketing plan was activated, and they remained committed to the plan for at least the first year. Marketing plans also keep advertising creative, budgets, and timelines on track.

With all this said, when implementing a new marketing plan, it's vital to be patient for results. Good marketing and advertising can provide short-term recognition. Great marketing and advertising work over the long haul. Usually, companies that don't sustain success lack perseverance and consistent implementation. Advertising that works doesn't require wheelbarrows full of money. However, it does demand thoughtful strategies, rigorous adherence to marketing plan objectives, and persistence to let the plan do its job.

After following a well-developed marketing plan for the first year, you can collect instrumental data that can be analyzed and reviewed. This information can be incorporated in the next year's plan to stimulate future results. More responsive software and research methodologies allow companies to measure audience experiences, especially when they track call-to-actions (CTAs) with traditional marketing verticals. By tracking online metrics via website landing pages and submission forms, you can gauge actual user responses to your message. Partnering with a professional marketing firm that understands both traditional and digital tools can help you integrate and deploy a broader range of marketing tactics.

Another problem that can beset marketing efforts involves a misunderstanding of the term “marketing” itself. Frequently, people and companies equate MARKETING with SALES. Yes, the two can go hand in hand. However, the terms differ, and it’s important to recognize the distinction. Adding to the confusion, some companies bestow the title “Marketing & Sales” to personnel, when these individuals are actually responsible for sales activity and growth. Take homebuilders, for example. While they might hire someone as a Marketing & Sales Associate, they actually expect that person to sell homes and meet monthly targets, so the company stays profitable. Sales, thus, generate measurable, immediate results. Marketing focuses on results, plus brand awareness measured over time.

The lasting rewards earned from MARKETING come from BRAND AWARENESS. Reminding people of who you are and what you offer them. This may involve the use of print or digital ads that create impressions that lead to SALES but can be difficult to quantify. Each impression makes customers feel comfortable with the brand and message. Eventually, when the time is right, the customer will call or visit your website to contact you, even though he or she may not recall the source of inspiration. This emphasizes the importance of consistency in marketing. When working with clients, we always delineate sales and marketing, explaining what they can do to encourage short-term SALES and the long-term MARKETING required to raise brand awareness and convey a cohesive message.

For the most successful outcome, you need both marketing and sales to work in concert, and the distinctions should be clearly defined in your marketing plan. Also, remember that, like a

business plan, a marketing plan should be revised at least every year and aligned with overarching business goals. If you're lucky, feedback from the initial marketing plan will demonstrate the importance of keeping things fresh and following a prescribed path. Referencing data from the previous year indicates what worked and what didn't. In addition, you can pinpoint business gaps, swells, untapped opportunities, and times of the year when you may need a boost of marketing support. Based on our own marketing plan, after about the three-year mark, the plan keeps getting stronger, and we work smarter because we have a strategy to follow and augment as warranted.

Diligently push yourself to experiment with new marketing initiatives as these become easier to track. You'll know whether to continue with these ideas, revise your CTA or marketing message, pause for reevaluation, or pivot to more realistic strategies that are not reactionary or unfounded. This preemptive approach will make you a marketing genius, too, because your charter won't deviate, and you can better control costs. When heeding a marketing plan, we have never exceeded a proposed budget. Working together and creatively, your team can develop your own internal marketing plan, customized to maximize key performance indicators, marketing dollars, and end results.



strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats

03

CONDUCT A SWOT ANALYSIS

Ahh, the tough part—figuring out what makes your business unique and how it can improve. This is what marketing professionals call a SWOT analysis. To continuously prosper, companies need to assess and have an objective understanding of their STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, and THREATS. This analysis helps define competitors, customers, and how to address both effectively.

The crucial data you uncover from the SWOT analysis forms the foundation of your overall marketing plan (see Step 2, Develop a Marketing Plan). A SWOT analysis can also reduce marketing costs by indicating how and where resources should be allocated. This is not rocket science, and although plenty of companies talk about SWOT, few do the hard work of the analysis itself. Or, the owners have a sense of SWOT for their company but don't share the details with employees, vendors, and team players. Therefore, everyone isn't working toward the same goals.

Too often, SWOT analyses are overlooked because the process takes time away from daily business. Yet ironically, if owners can't take time away from working AT their business to work ON their business (including the 10 steps outlined in this book), their companies could falter. I have seen clients turn their business around after acknowledging weaknesses, leveraging strengths, and developing a plan to overcome barriers to success. You have to isolate the deficits in your business, such as waning profit or productivity, and then address what you do well and what you could do better.

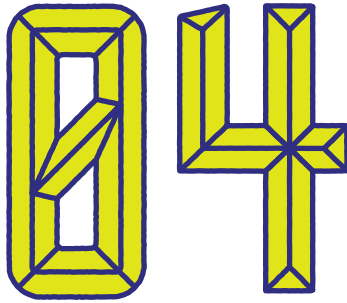
The most successful SWOT analysis (and consequently, market research) we completed at BURKE involved a large manufacturer. The company was introducing a new warranty platform, and we started the SWOT analysis by interviewing customers and senior management for feedback regarding the previous warranty program. Results were eye-opening as more than half of the manufacturer's customers didn't know the former warranty program existed. This was a well-established business that thought its customers knew about the program when in actuality, it had been poorly publicized and communicated.

We switched gears to develop a marketing plan that would highlight warranty options over the next three years. Eight years later, this company has one of the most competitive customer warranty programs in the industry. This proves you start by asking customers questions, carefully listening to answers, and urging them to be candid. If they are, they value and trust their relationship with you and want to make the experience better. It's a win-win situation for each party.

Already in the marketing arena? Don't forget to perform a SWOT analysis at your company before undergoing the exercise with others. You'll gain practice with the methodology and be able to verify or update your own marketing plan. Ask employees: What are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats? You might be enlightened by their comments and perceptions, plus you'll gain insights that could streamline internal operations. Proactive marketing makes perfect, and, in the SWOT case, practice can lead to positive changes and revenue.



focus on the big picture



RELY ON THE EXPERTS

Unless you run a conglomerate with an award-winning advertising and marketing division, the simple fact is you can't do it all yourself. A thriving company needs to focus on daily operations and sales rather than worry about managing marketing, even with a well-scripted plan. That's when you hire a marketing agency.

Marketing agencies help companies focus on the BIG PICTURE and furnish expertise that propels business growth. A good agency works closely with a company, serving as a strategic partner with a vested interest in that company's success. For example, I have followed this same logic by aligning BURKE with external resources and professionals who assure we provide the best service to all clients at all times. It's this synergistic bond that empowers a company to capture marketing opportunities as soon as they arise.

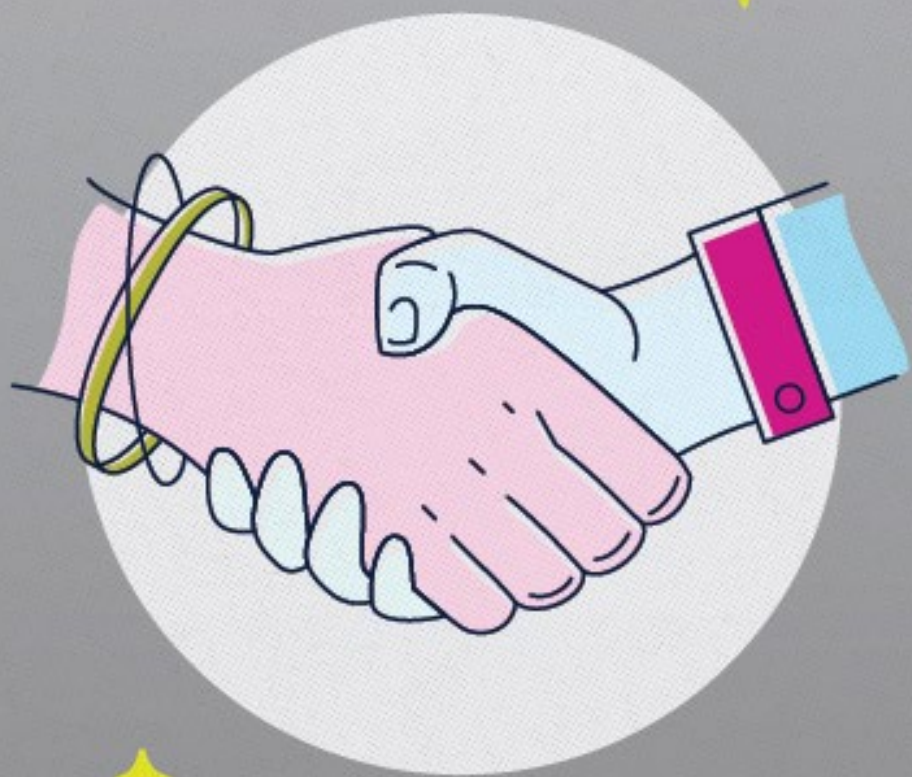
For the last 30 years, I have watched countless companies hire an internal marketing manager (or worse, hire or promote someone without marketing experience) to handle all of the firm's marketing needs. Nine times out of ten, this person quickly becomes distracted and overwhelmed by projects and requests. To function more efficiently, the manager could join forces with an agency or marketing specialty team and serve as a bridge between the company and agency (see step 5, Hire a Marketing Manager).

This arrangement allows you to hire the best individuals for each task at hand. You wouldn't hire a chef to work on your automobile or ask a lawyer to perform surgery. I recommend making the investment as early as possible, and partnering with an agency (small or large) to craft and support your PURPOSE, BRAND, and MARKETING PLAN.

I have been fortunate to work with companies that have prospered for 50 years or more, and they still recognize the need to work with marketing experts. Some of the clients who come to our business have been successful for decades, yet never worked with an agency before. In many cases, these are family businesses with a new generation at the helm—one that realizes times are different, and marketing vehicles that worked 40 years ago are no longer prudent. When these businesses celebrate their milestones and longevity, we help with that, too. Recently, we launched anniversary logos and branding messages for the 40th anniversary of Century Contractors and the 75th anniversary of Anthony & Sylvan Pools, both long-time BURKE clients.

With the rise of the internet and digital mediums, business owners turn to a marketing partner that can promote their company and services to a new online audience. Today's marketing professionals are not only younger, but increasingly savvy with online and digital marketing, including analytics, online data, social media, PPC (pay-per-click), SEO (search engine optimization), and SEM (search engine marketing). This competency asserts the need to work as a team with marketing managers to maximize the best-go-to-market plan for an enduring digital era. This also includes updated branding to renew the company's look and position it for a burgeoning future.

Some of these businesses will be acquired or sold thanks to a new facelift or product offering that gains market share at the right time. Some will embrace a new customer base that revives the company and its financial strength. This may be the most satisfying part of my job—watching a business change, adapt, flourish, and receive positive feedback from their industries and their customers. To be part of that is something worth savoring.



find a marketing partner

05

HIRE A MARKETING MANAGER

Whether you have an internal marketing department or not, once you have your marketing plan in place, you need a point person to LIAISON between your professional marketing agency and your company. This affords continuity to implement each facet of the marketing plan and see the best return on investment (ROI).

An integral part of an astute communications program, a liaison (either a marketing manager or specialist) works with an agency to facilitate initiatives. This person doesn't need to handle design or creative execution. Instead, he or she COORDINATES the team. By trusting a marketing liaison to oversee details and an agency to develop creative, you enable all team members to capitalize on their strengths and work as partners to achieve your marketing objectives.

Serving at a more senior level than marketing specialists, marketing managers traditionally head the marketing departments of large companies. However, a marketing manager and marketing

specialist have similar roles. For a smaller company, hiring a MARKETING SPECIALIST can provide the impetus for a marketing division to grow alongside the company.

An internal marketing specialist serves as the main point of contact for creative direction and the organizer for outside marketing resources such as agencies or freelance personnel. This liaison advocates the entire team and protects the company's BRAND, VISION, and marketing STRATEGY. Additionally, the specialist can manage budgets and expenses related to the marketing plan and assure everyone involved remains on schedule.

If you'd like to build a long-range marketing program but need to control costs in the short term, you may want to hire a marketing specialist and propose management training. As this person develops expertise with your company, products, and customers, he or she will gain proficiency to direct a comprehensive marketing program as your company matures.

A second option to hiring a full-time marketing manager or specialist is to contract a seasoned Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) on a part-time or fractional basis. This allows a mid-size company to incorporate exceptional expertise and knowledge without the expense of a full-time salary and overhead. In the past, I've worked as a fractional CMO with success that benefits both sides of the relationship. As a fractional CMO, I have been able to assist internal marketing communications (marcom) for both public and private companies, while simultaneously continuing a marketing consultancy.

In my 30 years of experience, I can attest that hiring a marketing specialist always pays for itself—with interest. When a company doesn't have an on-site marketing specialist or point person, the CEO, senior leadership, or an office manager often assumes marketing responsibilities, or the role is completely neglected. This not only consumes time from primary duties—it jeopardizes the marketing plan and leads to unsuccessful marketing efforts.

Companies worldwide have failed by not making marketing a priority. Instead, they constantly retool their marketing strategies and waste money on collateral materials that are ineffective. The marketing plan is forgotten, and the company image suffers from lack of consistency, creativity, and relevancy. That's why hiring a professional can lower overall costs and build brand recognition that retains long-term customers. And, if needed, the marketing specialist can measure and reconcile results of specific marketing benchmarks, making that person accountable for successful execution throughout the year. Trust me. It's one of the best company investments you will ever make.



create branding for your company

06

ESTABLISH BRANDING GUIDELINES

A company's foundation starts with its brand. In fact, BRAND DEVELOPMENT serves as the most crucial part of the marketing process. Too many companies choose a company logo and slogan, but don't go the extra mile to set branding GUIDELINES for internal and external usage. Guidelines reinforce how a company's logo, its mark (symbol or icon that identifies a brand such as the Nike® swoosh), taglines (e.g., Just do it.®), and the company itself should be viewed and respected. Companies without a defined brand and standards tend to be weakened by inconsistent graphics, logos, slogans, corporate colors, and marketing materials, which confuse customers and suggest the company doesn't pay attention to detail.

Having strict branding guidelines also aids vendors who replicate your logo on signage, apparel, ad specialty items, and sponsorship of an event. Guidelines illustrate how a company should be represented from its image and tone to its language

and the style manual it follows. All employees, including the CEO, should know your official company PMS color(s) and color formats, including RGB, CMYK, and PMS. Even knowing when to use a vector or bitmap logo matter. Fortunately, a professional marketing agency can help you navigate these details and draft guidelines that work for you and your company.

The good news is a small business can implement branding guidelines on the same scale as a big business and be well-positioned for the long term. A thoughtful, on-target brand and logo can last for decades as a company blossoms. This saves money by minimizing reprinted materials and avoids relaunching efforts that distract from daily operations. Guidelines prevent second-guessing and mistakes so you can focus on what you do best, rather than on whether people are using the correct version of a logo, mark, or tagline.

A business should review and amend its brand guidelines every six months to a year, to ensure standards stay pertinent. For example, you can refine secondary brand colors to work with the primary color palette and assign new PMS numbers. Likewise, over time a logo and tagline can be tweaked to be more modern while retaining CONSISTENT colors and formats. Global companies such as Coca Cola® utilize this tactic every few years to refresh the brand, make a statement, or initiate a slight deviation for added exposure. Customers may not realize the update, but they subliminally notice something has changed.

Branding guidelines should also include electronic email signatures and links to the company's social media sites. And don't forget about online posting and messaging parameters. Make sure your branding guidelines address how company posts are made,

and draft a professionally written boilerplate for press releases, articles, conferences, and events.

My last branding recommendation involves TRADEMARKING your company name, services/products, iconography, and taglines. By trademarking your branding elements, you assert that your brand is distinctive and valued. Many people believe adding the ™ symbol (which stands for trademark) protects them, but it does not. The ™ insignia is issued when a company has applied for a registered trademark or copyright, signifying the process has begun. After the trademark has been approved (which can take over a year), a service mark (SM) or registered trademark (®) can accompany the company's logo, mark, offerings, and tagline on marketing materials and signage for a total of five years in the United States.

Last but not least, when advising our clients about trademarks, we endorse working with an attorney. Proper trademarking plays a vital role in protecting a company's name, logo, tagline, and images, especially as these may later become valuable intellectual property (IP) owned by the business. Although the process involves a bit of time and expense, the protection it provides can be invaluable.



perfect your first impression

07

REFINE YOUR BUSINESS IMAGE

Business marketing begins in the first two minutes you meet someone. Your demeanor, attire, and body language all provoke a memorable first IMPRESSION for a customer or prospect before the first word is spoken. Similarly, your office space serves as a visitor's first tangible marketing message, so ensure your work environment corresponds with your brand and story.

Instituting a welcoming work environment doesn't require significant expense. Start simply and affordably with environmental graphics like the company logo displayed on office walls. Post company goals and mission statements, so employees and customers understand what matters to your business.

Paint an accent wall using a company PMS color, and add motivational posters to garner enthusiasm. Enlist a professional photographer or staff member to take photos of company projects, job sites, products, trade shows, and events to frame throughout the office. As a bonus, these can be duplicated as

custom gifts to thank clients after project completion.

Your conference room lends additional space to showcase company memorabilia, awards, honors, and accolades. To accentuate our company's commitment to the community, we display outreach programs and nonprofit boards we support. Make sure conference room chairs are comfortable, and stock snacks, beverages, paper, and pens for guests. If possible, add extra outlets and charging stations for guest devices.

As you enhance your company image, employee dress code and conduct should match your business focus and culture, while marketing materials and presentations punctuate the narrative. Complement your Employee Handbook with a CULTURE Handbook that identifies the company's expected dress code, values, ethics, etc. For example, if you have a relaxed dress code but still expect employees to look professional, list your rules for business casual attire.

Today, IMAGE and BRAND overflow to business social media posts, messaging, and technology. A television screen might be placed in the lobby to capture attention and highlight company assets. This can be accompanied by environmental branding such as custom scents and music played on phones during wait times.

The sense of smell ties most closely to memory and emotion. Imagine walking into a restaurant with a whiff of burnt food—you'd doubtfully return. I've worked with national homebuilders that infuse sales models with the aroma of fresh-baked cookies or grandma's apple pie. This recalls a positive experience when a buyer purchases a home.

When enhancing the office, don't forget about the front entrance, which is usually a client's first stop when visiting your company. With the influx of technology and smartphones, various firms moved away from having a receptionist to greet visitors. However, the practice of personally welcoming customers is making a comeback. This doesn't mean you have to hire extra personnel. Greeters could be staff members who rotate daily. Similarly, employees can answer the phone instead of impassive, automated systems.

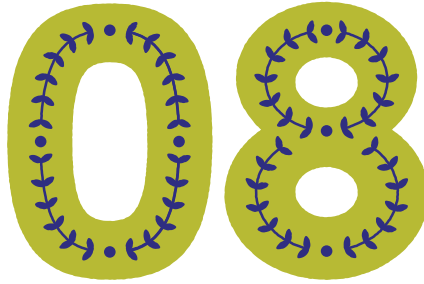
Once you're ready to promote your brand further, consider adding your logo and mission statement to bottled water and giveaways for office visitors. At BURKE, we not only serve our own branded water, but have expanded to brand BURKE coffee, beer, and bourbon. These marketing ventures with companies eager to distribute their products has led to several mutually beneficial partnerships.

Of course, the toughest part of refining your business image and brand is updating them in a timely manner. No doubt, it's difficult to upgrade an office that looks "perfectly fine." But the act of creative destruction, whether it involves your work environment, your brand, or products, shows clients and prospects that your firm is inventive, adaptable, and progressive.

The bottom line is customers equate a sophisticated office with sophisticated capabilities. Over the years, I've updated our BURKE office to simplify our branding message, signage, marketing materials, and images, and continue to modernize it every two to three years. By visually showing your business is forward-thinking, you demonstrate that you embrace the future.



make a difference



S U P P O R T Y O U R C O M M U N I T Y

Personally, I think it's every company's duty to bolster the COMMUNITY, and I'm grateful to assist numerous nonprofit organizations in the Charlotte metro and regional areas. This same philanthropic spirit extends to BURKE and its employees. Supporting a worthy mission, spurs employees to work as a team, builds a corporate culture, markets a company that cares, and expresses compassion and generosity. In other words, as you GIVE BACK to others, you're giving back to those you employ.

Community aid can take many forms, depending on your company's schedule, employee availability, resources, and size. But even the smallest effort can MAKE A DIFFERENCE. Consider joining the board of a nonprofit organization and lending your support through ideas, contacts, services, and membership. Many nonprofits need active board members as much as financial support.

Just as you should choose a board for which you have an affinity, select community projects that your employees can relate to, allowing each team member to decide on the extent of his or her involvement. You might be surprised at the number of organizations that need help on every scale imaginable, from a day of volunteering to sharing services and talents—the perfect union of their request and your skillset. You don't have to own a large company to contribute time or money to a nonprofit; you just need creative brainstorming.

In its earlier days, when our company couldn't support nonprofit organizations financially, we offered to design marketing materials and logos, donate creative consultation, and/or coordinate public relations for fundraising events. Not only did we measurably impact each organization's success—we made valuable networking contacts and bonded as a team. One of the first organization we supported was the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Annual Tennis Tournament. The evening before the tournament, a black-tie affair encouraged corporations to bid on the teams playing the next day. All of these proceeds benefited the CFF. In addition to my playing as a pro on one of those teams, our company donated the design of Invitations, programs, and marketing materials for the event. We also supported the Cystic Fibrosis Foundations' Tennis Auction Ball over eight years and expanded the event through the support of our clients.

Sometimes, getting involved can lead you to opportunities you never imagined. In the 1990s, we worked with “The Friends of Queen Catherine,” a fundraising nonprofit organization aimed at installing a statue of Queen Catherine of Braganza in Queens, NY. A 17th century Portuguese princess, married to King Charles II of

England, Queen Catherine inspired the name of New York City's Queens borough. Part of a larger project ideation by Michael Gallis, the sculpture was commissioned to renowned sculptor Audrey Flack who recently designed the four statues marking the Rock Hill Civitas & Gateway in South Carolina. A designer and budding entrepreneur at the time, I donated my services including 3D renderings and a promotional video presented at New York City's famed Plaza Hotel. While the project was cancelled later, Gallis introduced me to the nonprofits organization's founder who was also a representative of the Portugal Commerce & Trade Commission (ICEP), Manuel Sousa. That introduction blossomed into a 10-year relationship with ICEP and the good fortune to develop global marketing materials for the 1998 World's Fair in Portugal. It also marked the beginning of BURKE's international experience. Today, we work with corporations located in Germany, Mexico, Canada, Ireland, Italy, England, and Finland.

Since its initial opportunities to give back, BURKE has originated, organized, and promoted over a dozen fundraising events that continue to this day. To magnify our contribution, we also welcome involvement from our vendors and clients. With a simple introduction, you can connect one of your contacts with a community project that BENEFITS all involved. During the past 30 years, I have witnessed small firms organize substantial givebacks that would rival America's largest corporations. Community support that reflects a company's values and the rewards from these endeavors is always worthwhile. You establish a business culture that focuses on sharing gifts with those in need and underscore that each individual can change the world.



show your appreciation

09

BUILD AND NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS

For a company to truly succeed, marketing must be an ongoing responsibility for every employee. Cultivating new business partnerships matters, but it's equally crucial to nurture existing partnerships for RECURRING BUSINESS.

Whether you meet clients for breakfast, lunch, coffee, or an after-work beer, or you prefer to get together at social gatherings, concerts, and sporting venues, show that you enjoy being part of their TEAM. These “thank you” serve as personal touchpoints to enrich ongoing CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS. Think of them as tangible ways to say, “We value your business and, more importantly, we value you.”

Each year, our company sponsors tables at prestigious nonprofit and community galas and invites clients, employees, and contacts to attend. In the past, we have sponsored events for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Foundation, The Charlotte Trolley, Carolina Raptor Center, A Big

Heart Foundation, Charlotte Touchdown Club, Charlotte 49ers, and the Boy Scouts of America. Since 2008, we've held an annual Toys for Tots (T4T) Golf Tournament, a fun day which draws clients, vendors and attendees from miles away.

Nurturing relationships also applies to employees, vendors, and business partners. Treat employees and suppliers as well as you treat your clients to show you respect and appreciate their contributions. To help employees strengthen bonds and understanding, I recommend monthly teambuilding activities such as a sports challenge, a brewery, potluck lunch, or city outing. These unions stimulate company loyalty, develop an overall sense of inclusion, and champion employees as a cohesive unit. My most successful and enjoyable outings with my team have been to The U.S. National Whitewater Center, Carowinds, and Top Golf.

When you don't have the time or ability to convene in person, videoconferencing applications like Zoom, Facetime, Skype, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams have made it easy to communicate across state lines or internationally. Using technology, clients, satellite offices, offsite employees, and vendors can meet virtually without having to leave their workspaces. This encourages more efficient and impromptu interactions without extensive coordination, preparation, or travel.

Through long-term relationship building, many customers and clients transform into true partners who are loyal to your business. Naturally, nurturing these relationships must be backed by the delivery of exceptional craftsmanship and services for clients, each time and above expectations. The satisfaction

of providing successful marketing services that help our client's businesses grow organically makes me love my job and motivates me and my team to consistently improve with each new opportunity.

You also may notice the propensity to build and nurture relationships you are attracted to, fueling a consortium of like-minded Individuals who share similar objectives and goals. This alignment supports a solid company foundation and a core network that you will have for a lifetime. I've been fortunate to have developed many resilient relationships with people I met personally and professional since I started my business in 1991, and these alliances continue still.

As your own relationships grow, you will begin to collect experiences that form your next chapter which includes establishing "stories." Stories blend the experiences, anecdotes, and successes of you and your company and how you've connected with others over time. This narrative fortifies your relationships over the long term.

Sustaining a business and even personal network can be challenging and arduous, but also highly rewarding because you inspire trust that fosters stronger relationships over time. Your contacts will have confidence in you and your company, and that leads to potential referrals, lauded recommendations, and many years of collaboration.



compile your past, present, and future



TELL YOUR STORY

Every company has a UNIQUE STORY to be told. This narrative reflects your business personality, culture, beliefs, and what differentiates your business from the competition. Unfold a story that's forthright, accurate, engaging, and consistent with your marketing materials, including your company website, brochures, presentations, as well as your employees and sales personnel. Think of it as a book or puzzle where all the components fit together to form a vivid picture of what you want to convey.

Your story should include your company history, how the business started, and WHY. A firm's origin always interests customers who like to know a little bit about the company's background before moving forward. Posting a history page on your website, for example, adds valuable information. Another layer includes brief bios of your leadership team, including their passions and special interests outside the workplace. They may want to mention why they chose a particular college, their first job, hobbies, or

achievements—something that makes them memorable.

Personal details about you and your team distinguish the business. Nine times out of ten, a new client will discover a subject or insight from your past, something you have in common, which presents a natural icebreaker and kindred connection for a more organic conversation. I cannot tell you how many times my personal and business background experiences laid common ground between me and a new prospect. From serving as a Scoutmaster at the Boy Scouts National Jamboree to founding a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; playing varsity tennis in college or growing up in Massachusetts; heading the marketing agency for Portugal or participating on nonprofit boards that are personal to me, each experience has opened a door at some point in my life.

Once you have your business story in mind, be able to tell it in three minutes or less to hold the attention of new or potential clients. Then ask about THEIR BUSINESSES and LISTEN. This yields a glimpse of their goals and business personality so you can draw associations yourself. Consider a two-minute overview video and/or PowerPoint presentation that can be used by the entire team as a uniform company introduction. The story should include past and present accomplishments, plus plans for the future. Clients like knowing they're partnering with a business that is industrious and improving the community. In the end, you'll have a concise way to sell your strengths and assets, and you'll be able to target and hire top talent to write your next chapters.



Putting it all together

THANK YOU for the opportunity to share my OWN story and insights. Hopefully, these 10 Quick Steps to Marketing Genius can sharpen your marketing efforts and keep your business on track. With careful introspection, company-wide feedback, unwavering standards, and hard work, you can pave the way for success long into the future. And if you stray off-course, know that a professional marketing agency is just a Zoom or phone call away.

THE BRK Way

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Discover Significance

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Our Mission

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Our Values

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Engaging with clients and their goals

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Insightful Ideas that resonate

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