Ecommerce

Retail

10 Retail Experts Share Their Secrets to Successful Product Branding

Shopify Updates

by Alexandra Sheehan • Sales & Marketing

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Enterprise ↗

A strong brand identity leads to a strong impression on consumers. Your brand identity defines not only who your brand is, but every single interaction a customer has with your brand — online and in-store.

Brand identities have a major impact on consumers. But products can have their own identities, too. Product branding is when marketers introduce a product to the

public with its own unique identity. This can be with the product name, logo, design — any aspect of the product that differentiates itself from all else.

In such cases, the parent company — the brand — becomes more obsolete, while the product identity is of more significance. In a sense, these branded products can be considered mini-brands or extensions of the parent company.

Product branding emphasizes the commodity rather than the umbrella of the brand under which it exists. It's a strategic tactic retailers can take if they have a product that fits the bill: It's noteworthy and significant, or one of a few products in a line. If your business has a ton of dime-a-dozen products, it's likely not worth the effort.

But product branding can be tricky. That's why we asked 10 retail experts to share their secrets to successful product branding.

1. Promote What Your Product Provides

"Make sure you tell your shopper what the product gives them, not what it has. Otherwise, you'll just be providing boring facts that make consideration of your item work.

The more work shopping becomes, the easier it is to leave on the shelf. The more a shopper can quickly understand, 'this gets you back on the court sooner,' 'this gives you kissable lips,' 'this makes you look thinner without feeling like you're wearing spandex.'"

–Bob Phibbs, CEO of The Retail Doctor, a New York retail consultancy; author of *The Retail Doctor's Guide to Growing Your Business*

2. Position Your Product as a Service

"Think of your product brand as a brand of service: What experience or value does your product provide to your shopper that will make them loyal? Consumers are spending $4 on experiences to every $1 they are spending on products. This mentality is disrupting the retail space. Retail brands must determine what overall experience their products deliver to the consumer that adds value to them."

—Amy Lanzi, managing director at retail marketing agency TPN

3. Know Your Product's Brand Positioning

"Understand the product's brand positioning — all successful brands have a target customer and a positioning with that customer — ie. best price, best quality, most innovative, etc. Only by clearly understanding the positioning of the product's brand is a retailer able to properly place and promote the product within their own assortment."

—Mara Devitt, Partner at McMillan Doolittle

4. Educate Consumers on Your Product's Value

"The No. 1 tip I always hone in on with brands is make sure all of your marketing efforts educate your customers in some way. Educate them on the value proposition of the product, not only on the product in itself, but how it will have an impact in their lives. If it's a scarf, it's not just cashmere; it's a piece to accessorize your look, keep

your neck warm, wear as a wrap over your bathing suit, etc. Be sure to have the target audience in mind, and convey the true value add.”

—**Melissa Gonzalez, Chief Pop-Up Architect™ of The Lionesque Group**

5. Consider Your Employees

“Your employees are your most powerful brand-building resource — the customer experiences they deliver impact brand perceptions and preferences far more than any marketing you do, so make sure they understand and embrace your brand and appropriately interpret and reinforce it in every customer interaction.”

—**Denise Lee Yohn, author of** *What Great Brands Do*

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6. One Word: Consistency

"Retailers often aim high when it comes to branding but fall short due to a lack of consistency. From their in-store marketing to their ecommerce marketing to their social media efforts to their email blasts and more, consistency is key to keep your audience both engaged and connected to your brand messaging."

—Nicole Leinbach Reyhle, founder & publisher of Retail Minded

7. Allow Consumer Behavior to Drive Your Marketing Efforts

"The new rallying cry is 'always be in beta!' Be authentic but embrace change and customize your product's brand to your audience. Retailers hold the keys to understanding consumers. Smart retail branders will use that knowledge to customize brand experiences to each consumer profile in-store or online.

Consumers' needs and perceptions change fast and often. Use stores and websites as constant testing grounds to adapt to this ever-changing behavior. The most successful retail brands will act on this constantly changing landscape and stay nimble."

—Rob Wallace, brand advocate at Best of Breed Branding Consortium

8. Make Your Product's Brand Memorable

"The brand has to be the same all the time. If the brand is not consistent in its presentation, its promise also becomes inconsistent. The customer no longer sees it as being anything special."

—James Dion, president and owner of Dionco Inc.

9. Every Interaction Counts

"It's not enough to have great copy on your website or a beautiful product brochure. The fact that your prospect was on hold for five minutes influences brand perception. And when a sales representative appears gruff to customers, it damages your brand. That unanswered email? This also hurts your image. The bottom line is that branding is your intended *and* unintended messages, too."

—Liz Goodgold, founder of RedFireBranding

10. Be Strategic When It Comes to Using Technology

"From an interactive customer experience technology perspective, retail product branding can take many forms — from interactive displays that change their content based on what item the shopper picks up or even lingers in front of, all the way to using evocative videos or imagery in a geotargeted mobile message that offers a discount or promotion and at the same time tells the person why this item fits into *their* adventure, based on their own shopping history.

One key facet of any such strategy though — and this is a key part that is far too often overlooked — is to ensure that the technology is deployed in service of the product and not the other way around. It is incumbent upon deployers to make sure they pick the technology that best creates the right experience for that product, and that they don't just chase the latest, coolest tech that integrates with the social media app du jour without considering how it will enhance the customer's experience."

—**Christopher Hall, managing director of Interactive Customer Experience Association (ICXA)**
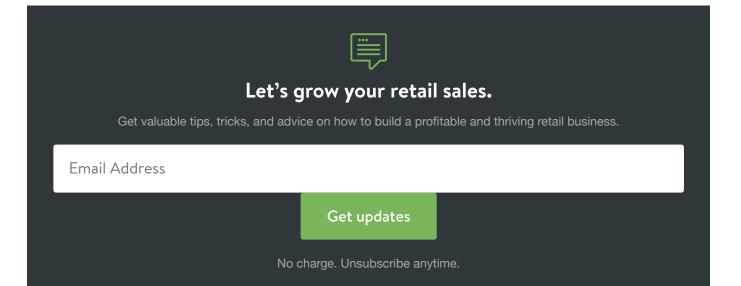
Ready to take some action?

Let us know which tip most resonated with you in the comments section below.

About the Author

Alexandra Sheehan is a freelance writer/editor and content specialist. She's worked with retailers ranging from Fortune 100 companies to Etsy shop owners, and is always looking for innovative ways to help her clients.
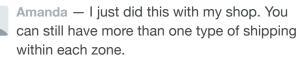
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