

Strategic Marketing

Interview with Brian H. Davis, Coast Professional

By Alex R. Trujillo

What does it take to successfully communicate new strategies to all of your clients and manage to be on top in the industry? After several years, your company might need a marketing makeover. Brian H. Davis, CEO of Coast Professional in Tustin, CA has spent the last twelve years in the collection industry. Recently, he has created a completely new identity for his company. We asked him to share insights into why he embarked on this endeavor and what he learned in the process.

Brian, Coast Professional has spent the last year reinventing their image, tell us what you have accomplished.

We specialize in educational receivables so it was important to visually organize our look and feel to make it consistent with our industry and the way we do business. We have generated traditional and creative methods of communication that clearly illustrate our brand. We have accomplished numerous tasks to achieve this, such as developing a new corporate identity, mission statements, objectives, marketing materials, presentations, Web site, and much more.

2) Some say that image is everything; is this true?

Image is important to a degree, but clients are looking for style and substance. The quality of the product or service should be prominent. Personally, I think reputation is everything and companies should speak quality across all areas of their organization.

What would you say is the most important or key factor when marketing a company?

Finding out what your client wants and making their needs the basis for your marketing.

How do you find and contact your target audience?

First, ask yourself, "What is my client base?" Knowing what you want is half way to getting what you want. After you have clearly defined the "Who", Direct mail is a cost effective method of the "How". From there, we have also started a referral program. The fundamentals behind referral programs are rewarding the referrer and only paying for advertising after it is already sold your service.

Is there a procedure you would advise when marketing to clients?

There are so many, let me elaborate on a few fundamentals. I am a firm believer in the residual impact concept. In this process, one communication builds on the next. Many companies apply the lion's share of their resources to supporting the existing business, counting on consistent service and reputation to carry the company to the next level. Modest or uncommitted marketing efforts may have left management with the impression that marketing does not justify the investment. Aggressive investment in broad marketing and innovation drives growth and produces results. This equation is proven over and over as evidenced in the strong branding of major, recognizable companies. Constant quality communication will

build strong relationships with your current and potential clients, much more than any single contact would ever do. You must realize how important marketing is and look at it from an investment standpoint rather than an expense.

Will this type of investment show a return profit?

Some businesses spend money on marketing and have no way of telling if it worked or more importantly whether they got a good return on their investment. That's where a good marketing strategy comes into play. Market planning and tracking protocols should be established long before any money is spent on execution. Good marketing is the same, or rather should be looked at the same. If this is a gray area...I suggest getting a good marketing firm. They will be able to supply you with methods for good a return on investment.

Who did you work with in order to accomplish your marketing goals?

We contacted a strategic marketing firm, Vinton Moss. They aided me with many aspects of my marketing, branding and communication. Sometimes marketing firms will provide you with ways to help you create profitable change in the first few meetings. If you think about it, marketing firms create and introduce money-making marketing strategies, somewhat like a stock broker. It seemed like a good idea to tap into some of their insight.

You mentioned something earlier



▲ Coast Professional new identity, created by Vinton Moss.

in the interview about ‘creative’ communication. What if you are not the creative type?

That’s a good second key point to marketing. You don’t have to be all that creative. You just need to be able to embrace change. For starters you can let your clients do some of the creativity and ask them what they want. One of the more simplistic fundamentals of communication for me to embrace was the changing needs of my clients: what they expect from me; what I can do for them based on those expectations. Often times this even requires me to change the way I perform certain operational tasks. It’s in my experience that if you make your company really surround its customers and have that be a basis for marketing, you are going to do pretty well.

Ok, so more companies should get to know their clients. What if that’s all squared away? What next? How do you apply that knowledge to marketing?

Address those ideas and concerns in your market strategy. How many marketing pieces have you seen that only talk about the company and say nothing about how their product or service is going to work for you? Whenever I develop a marketing initiative, I think about my clients needs first and try to focus on mutuality.

Mutuality?

Yes, find the mutual ground between clients and company. Apply strong efforts into creating something your customers will like you for. It’s like a coffee cup with

your logo on it kind of strategy, only I find out what percentage of my clients drink coffee first.

What should a company expect to pay, for a complete marketing makeover?

A comprehensive marketing package for a company that does \$1-\$10 million can range from \$60 - \$120k, depending on what you want your return on investment to be. Sometimes you will spend more than you initially thought. You have to know where you’re starting and where you’re going. Your long term goal should be thought out, that way all ideas or programs stay consistent and work on all platforms.

Conclusion

Whether you are developing a new identity or getting new business cards, you should look at the direction your company wants to go. Some decisions may be minor and some may be major, it’s up to you how much to invest and what you want to get out of it. To be on top, specific marketing tasks must be done and well planned. Contacting a strategic marketing firm to help you find these answers and help develop your new identity is wise. Deciding to invest in a marketing makeover clearly suggests that your image is vital in successful communications with your clients.●●

Check out Coast Professional online to see what new marketing strategies they created at www.coastprofessional.com or contact them directly at 800-231-0225.



▲ Coast Professional, new website, complete with many resources at www.coastprofessional.com.



▲ A complete marketing makeover includes new marketing materials, that help get your communication to all your clients. Above, Coast Professional new identity package includes folder, letterhead, and business card.