

# Big Business Branding On A Small Business Budget

Super Profitable – Low Cost Branding  
Strategies You Can Use Today



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**Terry:**

Welcome to the Brand Building Information Session. Today we are very lucky to be talking to Lee Schissler of CarillionUSA.com. Lee is the managing director of Carillion USA, which, as a matter of interest, Carillion rhymes with million, and it's a fighter in the Star Wars action series. So, I'll let you take it away, Lee. I'd first like to start out by saying thanks very much for taking the time to talk to us today.

**Lee:**

Sure, Terry. I'm glad to do it.

**Terry:**

Maybe you can start off by telling us what is Carillion USA and where did the name come from?

**Lee:**

Actually, Carillion means four bells or the bell tower. You see them at churches or on college campuses. The four bells stand for the four Ps of the marketing mix. That was the origin of the name. I have found out from some teenagers in the recent years that follow Star Wars that told me it is a large starship on Star Wars. I didn't know that at the time.

**Terry:**

One company name – many meanings.

**Lee:**

Exactly.

**Terry:**

What's your background, Lee? Where did you come from?

**Lee:**

Well, I was born at a very early age, and my mother was with me when it happened. My background is actually in packaged goods marketing. I have my master's degree from Northwestern University in Chicago. I spent some time in degree in packaged goods working on national brands for a large, international agency. My branding roots go way back to the early days in Chicago and New York.

Branding has gone through a lot of changes. The first agency I worked at was Ted Bates Worldwide, where the whole issue of the USP

was originated. Those were the roots that I grew up in, in the business. Through the years I've evolved to service sector marketing. Around the mid-90's, when the Internet came on board, marketing and an integration of branding both online and offline marketing became a key focus.

That's a little bit of my background through Carillion and through the advertising and marketing business through the years.

**Terry:**

Excellent. How long are we looking at?

**Lee:**

My career in marketing has been an 18-year career. I have been consulting for the last nine or ten years, working with various clients from billion dollar international companies looking for brand studies, the metrics behind branding, brand extension strategies and so on, all the way down to medium size and small entrepreneurial businesses looking to distinguish themselves through all the clutter that's in the marketplace today that we're being inundated with.

**Terry:**

Right. You mentioned something else there as we were speaking... you mentioned a business USP. What's that?

**Lee:**

A USP is a unique selling proposition. That's what closely integrated with branding. For me, it's hard to separate branding from your USP: what makes you different from competitors, and what distinguishes you from them. That is closely tied to your positioning line that identifies, clarifies, and articulates your brand message to your target market.

**Terry:**

So you have a brand message and your USP communicates that brand message.

**Lee:**

Exactly. It's like your USP is your DNA that really defines what your business exists for and who you exist to serve. It's hard to have a business without having a market to serve. How you position yourself to that market should all be tied back to your unique selling proposition and how you're positioned relative to competitors.

**Terry:**

Okay. So, would it be something like a slogan?

**Lee:**

A slogan is a good term to use. In fact, branding is often times confused with a logo. However branding is a little more complex and can be a little more cerebral. There are many books on the market that address branding and discuss the subtleties of that discipline. It does involve a logo, but sometimes branding extends beyond that. It can be the branding that's reflective in your philosophy, the way your people are uniformed, and the way your signage is displayed. It's part of how you do business to become part of your brand image.

**Terry:**

Okay. So, stepping back a little bit, what size of a business do you have?

**Lee:**

We primarily do consulting with a wide variety of companies. If you're referring to revenue for my company, let's just say we are a very comfortable six-figure firm. I work alone in the concentrations that I do. But, when there are needs for specialists like graphic artists, database specialists for our business development plans, or folks to cut codes for websites, I always call on experts and align them with the projects.

**Terry:**

Right. So, are you working mostly online or offline?

**Lee:**

That's a great question. Today it's so convenient to work online. For me, what that has meant is much less time on airplanes. We can now have one face-to-face meeting, and then conduct a great deal of the work online. We can communicate through e-mail, FTPing large files, or even through FedEx and augmenting that through online as well. Our business models work quite well. In fact, most of my clients are not local. They are either on the west coast, the east coast, or in Europe.

**Terry:**

Right. How does the system work? You contact a client, fly out to meet them face-to-face, and then the rest of the work is done online?

**Lee:**

Right. Some clients I have actually never met. I have one client who is based in San Francisco who is in professional services. He and I had exchanged e-mails and he said, "I would like to contact you for not only branding my practice but also positioning it and helping me do business development with a certain segment of the market."

**Terry:**

Can we go through that process then? That would be a good example of how your business actually works.

**Lee:**

This particular account came from a referral of another existing client. The individual knew that I would be willing to work with smaller entrepreneurial types who were launching their own consulting or their own business. So, it was built for brick and mortar accounts, but also to have an online presence.

So, he contacted me and I responded through e-mail. He identified exactly what he was looking for. Then, once we determined that he would be a good fit for my client portfolio and that I'd be a good fit for his expertise needs that he was looking for, then we developed an agreement. We then started to do the work through weekly conference calls and coaching sessions on developing his business.

Then, I took upon work for his branding business behind the scenes locally with some of my suppliers and we started working in that department. Then, periodically, after our weekly conference calls, we'll send him some updates on his projects, his components, and his media mix. That involves some direct mail, some online marketing, as well as some personal marketing where he is expected to go out and speak, deliver, and we will coach and help him on that aspect of business development as well.

**Terry:**

Okay. So it's really a whole business package that you're giving to him.

**Lee:**

Right. I like these opportunities like that because in cases where we feel that there is a good chance for a high return, we'll do a reduced fee but a percentage of revenue. So, often times, for those listening who do any type of consulting, that's always an attractive offer because it really puts your expertise on the line. If you can deliver results, then you should be able to share in the profits that are gained.



**Terry:**

How do you know, from the point of getting some of the profits that he's enjoying, how do you know how much of a revenue increase he's actually experienced?

**Lee:**

You just have to trust people. There are a few checks and balances. I wouldn't accept someone as a client if I didn't see the fundamental integrity to have a good business relationship. I think that's one of the most important things in finding a client to work with. The second thing, on increases in revenue, you need a benchmark. So, we agree that there will be IRS returns submitted. There has to be a trust on the client's part to commit to me in a contract form to give tax records, so I can verify changes in income.

**Terry:**

Okay. Fantastic. If we take a look at the branding... I know you have experience in the whole business development area, but if we focus just on branding, what kind of activities are involved in branding a business?

**Lee:**

It all depends on the size of the business. Let me just give you some ranges, and then you can I can determine where you want to dig in. Earlier in my career I worked with large, multinational companies that had branding. Their big concern was equating or dollarizing the value of the brand. Also, how it stacked up against competitors.

So, I spent a great deal of my earlier career in larger branding project doing research to find a benchmark of awareness for a brand. Then, we also did studies with their customer groups and what their buying propensity was with our brand verses competitors. So, as much as some people throw branding out as a bunch of hocus pocus, there are some measurable elements of branding that are very powerful. It creates an asset for companies who have invested in branding.

The problem is that branding is very expensive in the development and sustaining of a quality brand. In the larger or macro sense, branding is used by large companies for good reason. It can be measured; there are metrics that can be used in evaluating its effectiveness in positioning your product. Not only that, but also for distinguishing your product from other competitors and using it as an icon of value for what it stands for and what that product represents.



We've all heard the story about why people are more likely to go to McDonald's than Joe's Grease Burger Shack... there is a certain quality of value that it stands for in cleanliness that you can count on. Those golden arches represent their product. They are more than just a logo; they represent a philosophy of business and a quality of product.

**Terry:**

How do you measure something like that?

**Lee:**

Typically, when there are large budgets involved, large companies will go out and do consumer marketing surveys, or get a research firm to do key person interviews or quantitative studies to measure the unaided and aided awareness of the brand relative to competitors. Also, they do qualitative and quantitative research to see what this brand stands for in the mind of a sample of consumers.

That's part of the work behind the scenes. There is also work on developing a brand that is strategically aligned with the companies mission, products, and services. So, for a designer to take on a project like this, it's critical that these designers are trained in the importance of strategy and reflecting that strategy in the design of the branding system for a company.

**Terry:**

Okay. So, there is quite a lot in branding when you're working on a large scale. What if it's someone like your company or my company where we're just a little one-man shop type of thing? Is there any point in branding ourselves?

**Lee:**

That's an excellent question. There are two schools of thought here. There are those who believe that branding is absolutely essential because we are so over communicated. I read recently that we receive over 3,685 branding impressions each day. Frankly, I think that's probably low. Chances are it's much higher if you add on the online branding exposure we receive as well as we receive in other media whether it be outdoor, print, or broadcast.

So, there is that school of thought that branding is critical to differentiate your product or service from someone else. On the other end of the continuum, there are respected marketers, the Dan Kennedy's of the world, who think that no small business has the

budget to brand themselves. They think that it's not really achievable or worth dealing with. They think that copy drives small businesses.

I respect both positions and I probably fall somewhere in the middle because small businesses still need to be able to differentiate themselves. They still need to be able to encapsulate their service benefits in some kind of mark or brand. So, our challenge is to figure out how to do that affordably for small businesses. That's where we come in. That's what makes our services unique. When I do consultations, whether it be for a small or medium sized business, the challenge is how to help them do it with limited research so there is a rational for their brand so their brand is in context with other competitors.

**Terry:**

How do you go about doing that with a very small budget?

**Lee:**

It really depends. Sometimes we are relegated to secondary research, not primary research. So, I think that branding a small business is an important step. I don't think it should become something you become consumed with and spend an inordinate amount of your time working on because you're not going to be able to do it like the big boys. You should be able to do it in a way that will distinguish your business from your competition in that segment.

**Terry:**

What kind of activities should I be doing? If we take a look, for example, at The Business Professional now, and I say that I want to get my site out there and I want to brand my site. What should I do first? If you could take me on a step-by-step process, what do I do first, second, third, etc...?

**Lee:**

Of course, you should do some online research. There is a tremendous amount of information out there on branding. You can get an issue of Ad Age that usually has articles on branding. There are a lot of books on Amazon about branding. But, for a small business, go back to your business plan. If you haven't written one, having a one or two or three page business plan really helps you define who you are, what is your market you tend to serve, and what makes you different from competitors that would give people a reason to buy from you.

Using that information, you can formulate a rationale so you have a basis to build a brand. A brand is manifested in graphic elements, the name that you choose for that business, the symbol that goes with that name, and a positioning line that helps articulate that name and that symbol that you want to represent your business.

So, in a nutshell, you want your brand to have a rationale so it means and stands for something. You want it to be the symbol that you use, the name of your company and what it represents, and your positioning line, which helps extend and articulate what your brand is and your mission is. If you can come up with that combination, you can help differentiate yourself from competition and give consumers a visual shorthand to find you and recognize you and understand what you stand for.

Because we're so over communicated, and we have 3,600 and some daily brand impressions, by having this brand for your business and having people understand what you stand for and what you're selling, it provides people a visual and sometimes auditory shorthand. Logos are not always graphic logos; there are sound logos that people use in their marketing... usually larger companies use those. Online is no exception; you can have both graphic and auditory branding for your site.

**Terry:**

Can you give me an example of auditory branding?

**Lee:**

Auditory branding is a jingle that you use repeatedly or a sound clip that you use to identify a brand. For example, McDonald's has, "We love to see you smile." You don't even have to see it; if you hear it on the radio or hear a few bars of it, you understand what that represents. It brings to mind the visual images. Conversely, you can see something graphically and remember auditory cues that you've received from that same product or service. That then sets you emotionally and can't help influence you to buy or to favor that product.

Smart marketers for large and small companies who serve a niche are smart enough to use as many of the senses in the brand as possible. One of the things that makes them very successful is when they're consistent in applying those images. That's why companies spend a great deal on brand graphic, auditory, and online standards so branding is consistently applied in all media.

That way, when consumers see it, there is always that consistent message and consistent quality that is carried out. That's done for a very important reason. That affects how people buy, the cues they get mentally and the feelings they get about your products or services. They hopefully motivate them to want to do business with you.

**Terry:**

Okay. From a small business perspective, I have a website, I have a banner and my logo that is basically consistent through everything that I do, and I have a slogan that says, "Listen, Learn, Profit." Am I branded now?

**Lee:**

I have not spent any time on your site, Terry, but that question should really be asked to your customers. You already have an economical way to research if you've been collecting their names and e-mails. By the way, if you have a website and don't do that, you're missing a huge opportunity. You just go back to the folks that answer your message and build your own little survey. Ask them what that means to them; ask them if they recognize you.

Often times, you'll find that the branding might be too generic, or it looks like all the others so they confuse you, your product, or your message with one of your dozen other competitors. So, the best way to find out if you're having an impact and if they're recognizing it is to ask them.

**Terry:**

Okay. Then, with my branding, should I be as specific as possible or as general as possible?

**Lee:**

I think your branding and the name that you use for your company should both be as specific as possible. The logo or icon that you're using to represent your business should be as well. The more detail the better. Although, there is an argument in good branding that says less is best. The message can be very cogent; it doesn't have to be very lengthy. Every word counts in a brand name or in a positioning line.

**Terry:**

Okay. Then, how does it filter down to my bottom line? It seems to me that it would be a little bit difficult for me to differentiate whether

I'm making an impact because I've sent out an e-mail that really worked well and was written well, or is it the branding that is bringing people back to the site and making the sales... how would I differentiate the two?

**Lee:**

In the case of a small business, I think it would be very difficult to argue that the brand is what's driving them. Most of the time, particularly in online, it's the offer. What is the offer and what is the quality of your product or service that you're selling? That's what really drives a response: the copy that you write and how it's positioned.

When I said I was in the middle, that's where Dan Kennedy and that whole school of thought is on target. The offer does drive the response. When you run into a situation is when you're competing and there is a great deal of clutter in particular niche markets or general markets and you don't stand out.

That's where you have an argument to have a brand that people recognize and understand what you stand for. At least they know what you're selling. Your brand can't be so abstract that they don't know what you stand for. So, specificity is good if it defines who you are and what you're selling. We all have seen the AOL brand and we know what the Amazon A and the smiley face looks like. There are several online brands that are easy to recognize both that are purely in cyber space and those who have bricks and mortar, whether it's WalMart, Coke, or McDonald's.

A small business will never have that type of unaided awareness, or that prominent brand recognition that you will have from national advertisers. This is for several reasons. One, it's not necessary because typically we're servicing niches that we carve out; we're not out to the mass markets. Two, we don't have the multi-media budgets to drive that brand into the brains of consumers like WalMart or Sears or other national brands. We don't have the online budgets to buy the banners or the info structure that Amazon has or that eBay has to drive a message out. But, we can serve our defined market, know who our competitors are, and give our customers and our prospects some visual cues to know who we are and what we stand for with our modest branding efforts.

**Terry:**

Okay. So, if I'm sending out an e-mail or I'm promoting myself and I have a fairly good list of people who regularly receive an e-mail or information from me, and they know I provide a quality product, is their feeling of who I am and what I provide a part of branding as well?

**Lee:**

Exactly. A brand should affect as much as possible all of the senses that you can touch. It's hard to get folks to smell your brand, although you can argue that you can smell McDonald's brand because you can smell their hamburgers and their fries. But, your brand should touch as many senses as possible. If it can be emotive... you need something that can get a good response from your customers.

You can use certain colors because we know that there is even a psychology around colors that are used in branding. The name that you use for your company and even the font... all of those qualitative things affect human beings because we are not machines; we are human beings that relate to things aesthetically. They all affect our emotions and our feelings about your products and services.

**Terry:**

So does a different font actually give a different feeling towards my company?

**Lee:**

Maybe not in isolation, but in totality next to the icon that you use and the colors that you use, they can all evoke a positive response. That's why, even with smaller firms, we use trained, professional graphic artists to give them quality product. They may not go through 500 versions or concepts to get to that, but it will be one that's done properly that has quality to it and that you can be proud to put out there.

Some of the discussions that I've had with clients in recent years have been fascinating along this qualitative site. That's about colors. Some of them like oranges. Some, if they're in financial services, might think that red is a cool color because it stands out. Psychologically, red is not always good in financial services. It represents red ink and losses.

So, when you give thought to the colors that you use, what resonates well? What communicates stability and integrity? For years in the

banking industry the color blue has been one of those colors that communicates that trust. That's why folks, when they go to interview with bankers, will wear a blue suit. That blue has that believe-me character about it.

So, there are psychologists and sociologists who study this. It's kind of interesting to look at it. Even with a small business, if you give it a little bit of attention, it can have a big impact and set a good foundation for your business in the future. Chances are that you'll never have a multi-million dollar brand to invest in, but if you're consistent, your customers through the years will recognize you and keep coming back to you for that image that you've put out there.

**Terry:**

Is it going to be expensive? If I start a branding campaign right now, what kind of costs would I be looking at?

**Lee:**

It's really up to the individual. How small is small? It's like, how big is a breadbox? Is it as small as a toaster or as big as a Volkswagen? It's up to the individual business and what you're thinking. Brands can evolve. There are some folks that start small and their budgets are small, but at least they've given some thought to it and have some rationale or strategy for their business image. As they grow and get more money, they may want to evolve that brand and invest in some strategic work on their branding and positioning.

I've seen folks spend anywhere from nothing and trying to do it themselves, to \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 for a medium sized business just to get it right. Once it's done, it's not a recurring expense. It's a one-time investment that you make to use for years and years to come.

**Terry:**

Okay. What's the fastest way for me to start branding my company?

**Lee:**

Go back to your business plan and the foundation of your business. If you don't have a brand, take a look at the brands in your category that you like. You can even look at brands that aren't in your category, but that you have a good feeling about. Clearly, you can't rip off someone else's brand; there are things called trademark laws and copyright laws that would be of challenge for you. But, there are ways to find icons that you like. You can find a designer to work with

to develop that if you're on a tight budget, you can develop that brand.

You'll have to probably take the lead in the positioning line that you use for your company. Your company name is something that you're going to have to come up with too. There are also legal issues when you do this. If you are incorporated... I know there are some small businesses online who have not been incorporated, but there are liability issues that make it worthwhile. When you're going through the incorporation process, that's also a good time to have your name checked with the local secretary of state in your state to make sure it's available to use.

**Terry:**

Okay. If you were to put together a formula for branding, is there something that I could follow to say, first I need to look at specific icons that I like and fonts that I like, then I need to do this, and go along those steps? Or, is there a different formula that I should be using?

**Lee:**

One thing that I'll offer to those listening today, Terry, anyone is free to e-mail me to get this... I have a small checklist for branding for small businesses. If you send an e-mail to Lee2001@EarthLink.net, I'll be glad to provide that to you free of charge. It basically goes through the steps that we've talked about in general. Do your online research first. Do your own auditing of your business. Go back to your business plan foundation. Remind yourself why you're in business. Develop from that a swipe file of those brands or company names that you like that you can use to develop your brand.

Also take a look at what you're willing to invest to make this happen. Think about what kind of return you're going to get. If you're a very small business, I recommend not spending a great deal of time or money. Sometimes you can get the job done using your own resources or using the resources of a freelance graphic artist to help you achieve that.

**Terry:**

Okay. You mentioned a graphic artist quite a lot. Is branding really how people see your logo or your icon?



**Lee:**

Again, that's only a part of it. The reason that I use graphic artists is because not everyone is a skilled graphic artist. They can write, think through their business and do a lot of the thought work behind their brand, but most people are not trained graphic artists. So, I use that as someone who can help them in the process of branding.

**Terry:**

Okay. In my marketing, I focus on generating leads and sales. Is that part of branding?

**Lee:**

Branding should be something to help you do that better. But, it will never replace the quality of your offer when you're trying to sell something. The way your copy is worded and the way your headline is are absolutely essential. Branding simply gives your work a DNA and an identity that sets you apart so when they receive your information it's evident to them that it's from you and it stands for and symbolized your quality and integrity as a businessperson.

Online, it's probably becoming increasingly important because of fraud. Folks have been ripped off by people who have used online schemes. So, the brand is what helps people know that you're the real deal and that you're a legitimate business. It's not, however, going to improve your offer. That's a whole different skill set. I know you offer online resources in your program, Terry. Folks can access copywriting and headlines, so you word offers that actually generate revenue.

**Terry:**

Yea. If I only have two hours a day to work on my business, would it be more important to focus on my sales and marketing or on my branding?

**Lee:**

I mentioned earlier that branding is a one-time investment. Years ago my dad was teaching me how to build rafters for the roof of a garage. I went through about five two by sixes by not cutting the miter at the right angle. He said, "Put the saw down. How many times did I tell you to measure twice and cut once?" That truly is great advice about branding too. It's really a one-time investment, typically. Measure twice what your business is about. Once that's settled, you shouldn't have to spend time on branding. Other than making sure that it's consistently applied, all of your time should be on marketing and creating offers and selling things.

**Terry:**

Okay, super. Can you give me some examples of effective branding campaigns that you've worked on?

**Lee:**

There is one that we did recently for a company that works with Sears and national retailers. It's a company that had a homemade brand. In the past four or five years, they started to grow rapidly. This is a client that I'm working with right now, actually. It was a small business, but now it's become a medium sized business. I'm sure in the decade to come that it will become an even bigger business. They'd never taken the time to think about their branding, and they never thought about giving themselves a positioning line to set themselves apart from competitors.

So, we went through a process with the owners and some of the key stakeholders of that company in identifying brand options, both online and in print, that they could use as well as carry their environmental media. With environmental media, there are things like point of sale, signage, uniforms, and things like that. That was a little more involved, but that was a case where branding helped them class up their image and helped them with their curb appeal from consumers who would do business with them.

On the other extreme, I worked with international companies who had brands, but they were growing other vertical service segments of their business. They wanted to see if they should create separate brands for these distinct service lines, or should they do brand extensions of the core brand.

**Terry:**

Can you explain that a little bit?

**Lee:**

Sure. A brand extension... let's take the airlines for examples. When you fly Delta airlines, you will fly on the regional service, Delta Express. They made a strategic decision way back that, instead of using Atlanta Southeast Airlines, which is the holding company that runs the planes, they would get all of their livery in the Delta logos and the Delta colors. It would still be a business owned by ASA, but it would be flown into the flag of Delta. That would be a brand extension. Delta becomes Delta Express. They don't want to confuse

it with the core brand, Delta, but Delta Express is an extension of that mother brand.

**Terry:**

Okay.

**Lee:**

In the case of United Airlines, instead of using United Express, they've come up with a low fare division called Ted that links to United, but it's its own separate brand, even though people know it's a part of the United family and it has the United DNA.

Similarly, Delta, when they came up with a low fare brand, they didn't want to confuse it with their core business, so they came up with Fly Song. Don't ask me what that means or how they arrived at that, but their strategy was having a whole different look and delivery that was not a brand extension of the Delta name.

**Terry:**

Okay. What's the benefit of doing it that way?

**Lee:**

The benefit is, if you're big enough to have brand awareness of a core brand, the benefit of a brand extension is to borrow from the currency from the stature of an existing established brand, and leverage that by extending it into a new service line. The cost for starting another brand in the big leagues from scratch and getting it planted into the consumers' minds is very expensive because of the investment you have to make in buying the media to get that message out in the marketplace both for visual and auditory viewing.

**Terry:**

Okay. So there is quite a lot of work to do there.

**Lee:**

Yup. In the context of small business, like we were talking about earlier, most small businesses need not worry about brand extensions. When you're small enough and you want to have multiple streams of income and multiple sites, for example, there is no reason why you can't create totally different brands that speak specifically to the niche that you're trying to serve. Chances are that you have not made the investment in one mother ship brand that is so valuable that you want to leverage off of it.

**Terry:**  
Right.

**Lee:**  
The only people who could get away with that would be Amazon or eBay. eBay has done this in one sense through an acquisition of Half.com. Half.com sells half priced books and CDs and so forth. It carries the eBay DNA, but it's clearly a different site that they are leveraging with the eBay name. But, it's a Half.com/eBay company.

**Terry:**  
Right. Okay. So, can you give me some examples of branding campaigns that didn't work?

**Lee:**  
Well, the textbook case was Coke, when they came out with New Coke, which was a brand extension of the real Coke. It also involved fiddling with the product. I guess you could argue that there was some branding extension gone awry. Others argue that it was a brilliant public relations maneuver to raise awareness of the product, and, in the end, still increase sales.

On the online side, nothing jumps to mind right now, Terry. There is so much out there on the web right now with companies coming and going. During the dot com era, when there was tremendous growth and companies were going public, I'm sure there were examples of branding that didn't work or branding that wasn't strategically aligned with the company's mission and services.

**Terry:**  
Is there any real difference between branding online and offline?

**Lee:**  
There shouldn't be. In other words, there should be congruity between the image you see in bricks and mortar and what you see online. That congruity helps the consumer understand what you stand for; it carries the message to an online environment. Of course there are technical differences in that you go from a world of CMYK to RGB when you're working with online and broadcast environments.

But, also, branding online doesn't always have to be so prevalent. In fact, for a lot of the major brands, it's almost like a very small endorsement seal to know what site you're on, but they put the emphasis on the offers. That's exactly what your website should do.

Branding should be a DNA seal or validation, but the real effort should go into your offer and what you're trying to sell.

**Terry:**

Okay. So, if I started a branding campaign today, in conjunction with my offers and my marketing, how long would I expect to wait until I see some sort of improvement or results on my bottom line?

**Lee:**

The only way to know that is by testing. You have to see how many offers you're getting today with your current marketing efforts without any type of distinctive logo or brand. Then, go back and measure it. The way you measure it is by asking your current customers, exactly a year after you introduced a brand, about their feelings about it. Take a look at your sales records of course, but go back to your customers and benchmark the perception of your company.

The reason it's important, even for small businesses... I'll never forget what a professor said at Northwestern back in the day... "Would you go to a doctor if he had a shingle with misspelled words outside his door? Verses going to a doctor with a standard bronze plate bolted to the side of a brick building that said, 'Dr. So and So M.D.'?" It's just the perception between if you're a real, legitimate business or a fly by night.

So, It's not always easy to correlate hard dollars like you would on a direct mail offer or an online offer, but it is something that, in the grand scheme of things, has a positive impact on the consumer buying what you have to offer.

**Terry:**

So, you mentioned that I would go back and talk to my clients or my customers and ask them questions about branding. What kind of questions would I ask them to get the feel if I was branding successfully or not?

**Lee:**

There are so many variables there. It depends on what you've been doing in the past. Let's assume that you've had no branding in the past. One good way to start is to benchmark your sales from your existing customer base. But, go back and ask them things that may not directly relate on the surface to branding, but in fact do have an impact.

For example, "Why did you originally buy from me?" Sometimes these can be done with a phone call to very good customers, who you have a relationship with. Ask them, "What interested you and got you to buy from me?" You'll get answers that range from, "It was an irresistible deal," or, "I felt like I could trust your site because you made guarantees in your offer," and so on.

You can also ask image questions about your company. You can ask, "What was your image of us?" They may say, "I viewed you as an honest, sincere group operating a small company." Others may think you're a major corporation by how you portray yourself with your website or your online marketing.

Then, if you actually have some concepts down, you may send them to some of your good customers and say, "I would like to brand my business. Here are some concepts that I'm considering. I would just like to involve you and get your feedback." Include them and listen to them and find out what these icons and combinations that you've come up with represent in their minds. Find out what kind of perceptions they would have of you if you were using that for your business.

**Terry:**

Okay. Super.

**Lee:**

Again, with a small business, I wouldn't spend a great deal of time and resources if you were just starting out on the branding effort. But, as you continue to grow, it's something that will pay dividends long term by raising the bar of your image with your consumers and by positioning yourself against competitors.

**Terry:**

That's super. You've been extremely helpful, Lee. Do you have any additional helpful comments that you would like to pass on?

**Lee:**

I think that most of the folks listening to this are doing online marketing. Even though some bricks and mortar small business people listening to this, I want to say that it's all about the offer and the copy. If you're going to sell, a brand won't do the sales job for you. It's not designed for that. A brand is something that will give you a differentiator or a symbol to set you apart. It's up to you to deliver the quality product and service. It's up to you to write smart

copy that motivates people to buy. Branding is just a part of the new you that you use to be successful whether it be online or offline in your small business.

Folks that would like to learn more about this are welcome to visit CarillionUSA.com. My e-mail address is Lee2001@EarthLink.net. I'm happy to share that branding resource for small businesses, you just have to put in the subject line, "Small Business Branding," and I'll be glad to send that out to you. Those that are state side that would like to call are welcome to call me at 713-723-1629.

**Terry:**

Excellent. Thanks very much for your time, Lee.

**Lee:**

You bet, Terry.

**Terry:**

You've been listening to Lee Schissler, the managing director of CarillionUSA.com, and myself, Terry Telford.

Thanks very much for your time.