

Protecting Your Brand: A Gift Not Reserved for the Holidays



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As we enter the holiday season, one thing that all construction industry professionals can agree on is that brand protection is a gift whose usefulness never ceases. You understand the significance of it. Your logo may appear on scaffolding, on the tops and sides of buildings or in trade publications. Your safety awards may adorn the walls of your places of business, and the finished products of your lucrative contracts remain the topics of conversation among those who are fortunate enough to live in, work at or otherwise experience the benefits of one or more of your projects.

While largely a focus of ad agencies and public relations companies, brand protection has practical and legal considerations worth considering:

False Advertising

Lawsuits - Even the most comprehensive disclaimer cannot overcome representations about the goods and services that your company has to offer. Before you approve any advertising related to your business, ensure that you are able to do everything that your advertisements represent. For example, if you represent that you are bonded and insured, verify that your insurance is current and that your surety still considers your business a good risk for construction projects. Otherwise, your business could find itself in the unenviable position of having to defend against state and federal claims for misrepresentation.

Increased regulatory oversight - Claims of false advertising may spur not only lawsuits, but also independent investigations from a host of federal, state and local government agencies that exist to ensure that your project does not have the potential to become a safety or environmental risk. Random inspections are expected during the course of a construction project. However, inspectors read the papers and watch the news also. Additional assessments of your project will not only cost you and your client in terms of lost productivity for a particular project site, but may actually increase your overall cost of doing business and thereby affect your ability to create jobs and to compete for projects.

Loss of business - An obvious outcome, but the most devastating effect of false advertising is that it decreases interest in your business with potential clients and may lead to the termination of projects with existing clients. Minimizing the risk that your business will be affected as the result of false advertising is a completely achievable goal.

Workplace Safety

Workplace safety laws exist to decrease the likelihood of personal injuries and illnesses in the workplace. Some of the ancillary benefits of a safe workplace are increased morale among employees and reduced workers' compensation rates. Also, your company will be more attractive to potential employees if your business has the reputation for taking no risks when it comes to the well-being of employees. Projecting a positive image to both your customers and your employees is free advertising that will manifest itself in increased productivity and higher profits.

Review Stereotypes

More often than not, construction professionals have to work to dispel the notion that anyone can work in construction regardless of their abilities or educational background. The "blue collar stigma" espoused by those not in the construction industry exists and unfortunately has been the basis for many of the laws that are promulgated by well-meaning politicians who want to ensure that the unemployed and underemployed get the opportunity to be productive members of society. While verbally articulating the attributes needed to succeed in construction, never miss an opportunity to emphasize the professional traits that contribute to success..

Addressing the Millennial Factor

If you have done any employee recruitment recently, then you know that millennials, persons born between 1982 to 1994 in the age range of 18 to 30 years, cannot be ignored, not only for the contributions that they can make to your workplace, but for the attitudes that they possess about how to get things done and how to make the world a better place. Offering training to senior management of your business about how to work with and, more importantly, provide leadership to millennials will not only score you free points with the workforce who you seek to attract to your business, but also reinforce with veteran employees that your business continues to be a thriving entity in the construction industry.

Maintaining Relationships

Whether it is with your clients, your employees or your colleagues or competitors, there is no better way to enforce your brand than to maintain respect. Do what you say you are going to do. If your business cannot complete a project on schedule, address the situation sooner rather than later to avoid the threat of a client terminating the project. It could mean the difference in a fully executed change order or a complaint against your company. When workplace issues arise, document how you handle the issues. Then read what you write. If it does not read convincingly to you, chances are that it will not be received favorably by a safety investigator or an ex-employee seeking retribution for an unfortunate workplace incident. Avoid mistakes, but if they are made, own up to them. There is no substitute for maintaining relationships in the construction industry. Make your brand one that signifies best practices and continues success in the future of construction.