

Set Sites to Tell a Brand's Story

By Steve Tansley, Blue Pencil Unlimited

GOOD DESIGN ELEVATES a brand, but it's not the only factor. Selling effort is what makes a brand successful, and this is a do-or-die insight for small and mid-size businesses. Design can enhance a brand by providing the aesthetic message, context, spirit and narrative, but only if the brand has a vehicle to ride it into market.

Business owners often tell me that all they need for a return on investment is a new logo that "pops." That just isn't true. However, if the brand mark or website speaks clearly to what they are selling—and tells a story!—then the brand gains some traction and is poised for success.

So, let's talk about gaining traction and look at some case studies of local businesses.

Thinking Zino

Chef Matt Carter of Zinc Bistro at Scottsdale's Kierland Commons had the challenge of creating an online experience that mimicked the experience of eating in his French bistro restaurant.

As soon as diners walk into the restaurant, they feel the authentic spirit of French bistro-style cuisine. The "zinc"

bar at the entrance prominently features a French egg-holder, a traditional touch in France. The story Carter wants to tell is that by coming to Zinc, you will have a true and genuine French culinary experience, from the moment you arrive and hear the music and conversation to

the time you leave and see street-side dining.

Zinc Bistro's website needed to echo the physical experience of the restaurant. It needed to be about entertainment, not just content. The website's story of Zinc Bistro begins with beautiful photographs of the restaurant and rapidly moves to modern Parisian music. The subtle colors of the site allow the photographs to take center stage.

To navigate the site, users interact with the "French egg-holder," which invites them to playfully explore and enter the front door. Once inside, clean design doesn't obstruct the user's experience but guides them to the menu to see more of what Zinc Bistro has to offer. This is how they are telling their story. (www.zincbistroaz.com)

Diabetic Health

Gloria Smith oversaw a similar transformation as product director for Direct Diabetes, a web-based supply business in the Airpark. The company overhauled its logo to modernize its message for a growing community interested in diabetic health and supplies.

Smith then consulted me on implementing the new mark in a rich, in-



Grand Brand Questions

Answer these questions when creating a brand or overhauling one:

1. What is your plain-spoken selling concept?
2. Is there a story about it the customer needs to know?
3. Why do they need to know?
4. Is the story compelling enough to get the customers to tell other people?
5. How can I continue to bring fresh content to the community that is growing around my story?

teractive experience that reflected the company's goals. Company president Simone Blanchard's written promise to customers clearly summarizes those goals: "I take personal pride in doing all I can to help each of you receive quality, brand name supplies in a timely, cost effective manner. You can have peace of mind knowing that at Direct Diabetes, exceptional customer service is our first priority."

The site had to be welcoming, friendly and intimate while maintaining the brand identity and color palette of the new logo. Because the logo used both a serif and sans serif font, the duality of elegance and modernism needed to be present in the website fonts. Close-up photographs of smiling faces appealed to the target audience and created a welcoming feeling as visitors glided through the web pages. Information is displayed in a large font that older users can easily read. By crafting a design that directly focuses on customers, Direct Diabetes Supply reinforced the message that clients are No. 1. (www.directdiabetic.com)

Eco-Hatching Plan

Entrepreneur Andrea Nylund had an idea to help teach people about the delicate environment. She created Eco-Hatchery, a web-based company. Her story is simple: Each person can reduce his or her carbon footprint at home by using an eco-kit. The kits help to quickly reduce energy consumption, making a difference in just one weekend. Nylund's goal was to have a strong brand mark that would tell this story.

The Eco-Hatchery logo needed to be a strong, memorable mark that spoke to niche male and female consumers, ages 25 to 50. With a lot of exploration and input, the new logo features a home with a green plant growing from the chimney.

The word "Eco" is set in an inviting lowercase type and is bolded to show importance. "Hatchery" is set in smaller-scale capitals to act as the logo's anchor. To appeal to the target demographic, Nylund chose the colors yellow-green and dark purple.

The new logo sallied forth on product packaging, marketing collateral and the website. Nylund believes that when people buy the kits, they feel a real connection with the brand because of the logo and the story of Eco-Hatchery. She says customers tell others people about the kits, which is a real marketing value. (www.ecohatchery.com) ■

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