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Marking Your Territory: Strategic Marketing

LORI TURNER

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I bet you didn't know that your dog could teach you a thing or two about marketing.

I've learned some important marketing lessons from mine – like always mark your territory, though maybe not in the literal sense. One of the most important marketing fundamentals is to identify and take ownership of a unique brand territory.

A brand territory is simply a point of differentiation that you lay claim to. You're putting a stake in the ground, and proclaiming what makes your company unique.

Determining that territory can be easier than it sounds. A great way to start is by surveying your customers, prospects and even your employees.

Ask how they think you're different from your competitors. Also research the competitive "brandscape" – the brand positioning of each of your competitors.

You're looking for a point of differentiation or brand territory that can stand up to these four questions:

Can I uniquely claim it? No competitors make the same claim.

Is it a relevant point of distinction? Do prospects really care?

Can I prove it's a differentiator simply and easily in just a few words? Does it require a long explanation?

Is this differentiator aligned with my company's internal realities? Can we deliver on it consistently? Or is there a potential brand gap – a disparity between what my company promises and what it actually delivers?

Case in point: [Tom Smith](#) runs a business called Handyman Concierge, offering repair and renovation services.

Tom's point of differentiation is that his crew shows up at a specific time – versus "sometime between 12 and 5." If they don't arrive on time, the customer receives 10 percent off the price for every 15-minute delay. His prices are, on average, 10 percent higher than his competitors.

Tom's tagline is "On time or on our dime."

This fictitious example illustrates a legitimate approach. Tom has built a strategy around a concept that resonates with many of us – time is valuable – and he charges a premium because most of us recognize that if we have to spend time away from work to wait for a repairman, we're losing real money.

The key is the on-time promise isn't hollow. Tom's scheduling and operations support the promise. Also, so does the crew's pay and incentive structure. Tom charges a premium people are willing to pay.

In turn, Tom motivates his team by offering bonuses if they are on time 95 percent of the time while maintaining high customer satisfaction scores.

Is this a strong differentiator that Tom should work to own? It's unique, it's important to customers, it's easy to prove (or you receive a discount) and Tom's team can deliver on it.

Differentiation isn't achieved with a catchy tagline. You must identify something that truly matters to your target audience, and then deliver on it.



Lori Turner

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MORTGAGES	120	331	8,263
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	0	153	4,617
BUILDING PERMITS	0	489	14,827
BANKRUPTCIES	61	283	7,175
BUSINESS LICENSES	14	75	2,231
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	69	717	9,575
MARRIAGE LICENSES	0	80	1,764

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Once you've found it, develop your tagline and supporting marketing strategy. Then get ready to mark your brand territory before someone else does.

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Julie Lunn, managing partner at RedRover's Nashville office contributed to this column.

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