

# Build a Kick-butt Brand On a Shoe-string Budget

By Geoffery Moore

“Don’t talk to me about branding! It’s a waste of time and money,” a small business owner told me. Was he right? Is branding only for big corporations with buckets of money to spend on marketing?

Well, I want to kick that bucket right now!

The truth is, branding—when it’s done right—is a cost-effective way for a small business to spread its reputation further and faster. And what business wouldn’t benefit from a stronger reputation?

Actually, the smaller you are, the more important branding is to your business. Smart branding will help you get more mileage out of your limited marketing dollars and even help you look bigger to prospects and customers.

Is branding complicated? Actually, it’s a way of simplifying your message and getting it boiled down to a single idea that can spread everywhere.

But isn’t it expensive? It doesn’t have to be. Consider the story of Kate.

## **Building a Brand on \$100**

In his book *Selling the Invisible*, Harry Beckwith tells about Kate, a high school student in a small Midwestern town who wanted babysitting jobs. Thinking entrepreneurially, Kate bought a wooden rocking horse at a yard sale, painted it red, and on the side she painted, “Kate Loves Kids: World Class Baby Sitting” and her phone number.

Whenever Kate got a babysitting job, she would ask the parents if she could place the red rocking horse on the front lawn. (This was a small town and people felt safe letting her do that.) People began to notice the red rocking horse around town.

Next, Kate prepared some posters featuring the red rocking horse with her line and phone number, and she put these on bulletin boards in grocery stores and other places. Kate's uncle, who owned a local video rental store, let her slip a sheet featuring the red rocking horse into the back of the video jackets. Now people were seeing the red rocking horse everywhere, and soon Kate was flooded with more babysitting jobs than she could handle.

Then Kate rounded up her friends at school who were looking for babysitting jobs and signed them up to be part of her babysitting network. She took 10% off the top for handling, which the other girls were happy to give her because they knew they wouldn't have to worry about looking for babysitting jobs.

So, yes, Kate was able to build a brand and a business for about \$100.

If you wanted to define the key elements of a brand and what makes branding work, the story of Kate would be a good place to start.

**A Simple, "Sticky" Catch Phrase.** Kate captured the essence of her brand message in a single phrase that stuck in the mind: *Kate Loves Kids: World Class Babysitting*. Tests show that hard sounds like "k" and "x" stick in the mind better. The repetition of the "K" sound with "Kate" and "Kids" and "Class" helps to make it memorable. And the intentionally exaggerated phrase "World Class Babysitting," helps as well.

**A Strong, Relevant Promise.** Kate's branding line spoke directly to a key concern of parents: finding someone they can rely on to babysit their children. It promised a young lady who apparently loves kids and will be responsible.

**Memorable Image.** The image of the red rocking horse stands out, captures attention, provides a memory hook, and evokes feelings of childhood and fun. Since people remember pictures better than they remember words, this helped Kate make her brand quickly recognizable. You can imagine people saying, "You need a babysitter? Call the Red Rocking Horse girl."

**Media-Wise.** Kate found ways to keep her brand showing up around town in places where potential clients would be looking. The more they saw it, the more people would tend to think, "She must be good, we see that red rocking horse everywhere." Familiarity breeds trust.

**Maintained Consistency.** Kate stayed committed to her brand and kept it consistent through all communications. Over time, as more and more people saw the rocking horse, they became more and more familiar with her brand. And this put them in the comfort zone with her.

### **The Snowball Effects of Branding**

Sure, it's an investment in time and money to build brand recognition. But once you get there, you begin reaping all kinds of benefits that have a momentum-building, snowball effect: *the more you're known, the more your business grows, which makes you more well known, which makes the business grow more, and on and on it goes.*

This is true of very small businesses as well as very large businesses. So before you write off branding, consider the "snowball" effects of brand recognition.

**Comfort Zone Factor.** Building a well-known brand puts more consumers in the comfort zone with you. They begin to feel they know you. And the more they see your brand everywhere, the more they will tend to *assume* that you're a quality company.

**Decision Shortcut.** Branding shortcuts the decision-making process for busy consumers with short attention spans. The more people know and trust your brand, the more they will call you *first* instead of shopping around. People began to call Kate simply because they saw her red rocking horse everywhere and felt safe with her.

**Reduce the Cost of Marketing.** As brand awareness builds, more and more people will become customers simply on the strength of what they know about your brand. Eventually, you won't have to work so hard or spend so much to get new customers.

**Encourage Customer Loyalty.** Building a brand that people *remember and trust* encourages your one-time customers to become life-time customers who buy from you again and again. People like to stay with brands they know and trust.

**Trigger More Referrals.** Building a brand that people remember also triggers more word-of-mouth referrals. The more your brand is on people's minds, the more it will also be on their lips. People are more comfortable referring a company when they know it is a recognized brand. In Kate's case, you could imagine someone moving to town, asking about babysitters, and being told, "Call the red rocking horse girl."

**Defend Against Competitors.** The best defense is a good offense. The more customers know and trust your brand, the less they will be vulnerable to other appeals. And new competitors who see how well-known your brand is will be less eager to move in on your territory. Kate’s brand made it harder for other girls to get babysitting jobs!

**Recruit the Best.** Having a popular brand helps to attract better employees, which, in turn, can help maintain morale and quality of work. People like to work for a company that is well known and respected. Remember Kate’s friends who were glad to be part of her network.

**Increase the Value of Your Company.** Building a strong brand makes your company much more valuable (in case you ever decide to sell or need to attract investors). The *New York Times* reported that many large corporations today calculate that more than 50% of the value of their corporation can be attributed to their brand.

When you fail to build a widely recognized brand, you miss out on this Snowball Effect. And if you don’t build a dominant brand in your market, *sooner or later someone else will*. They will own the prime spot in consumers’ minds—and all the leads and sales that come from that—and *you won’t*.

### **Hitch Your Business to a Brand**

Without building a brand, your marketing and advertising efforts are apt to be scattershot—like trying to herd a bunch of horses that want to run in different directions.

But when you build a unified brand, it’s like you’ve hitched all of your marketing, advertising and communication “horses” together with one branding idea, to pull your business.

You’ve heard the phrase, “Hitch your wagon to a star”? That quote speaks of having a dream, a vision that drives your business.

Likewise, when you “hitch your business to a brand,” this provides the marketing force and energy to help you realize that vision.

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**If you think a branding campaign might be right for your business—or if you have some other marketing need or question—call Geoffery Moore at 1-603-353-4700. Or send an email to [bullseye@YourBestMarketingMove.com](mailto:bullseye@YourBestMarketingMove.com). Geoffery will give you a free consultation to help determine your best marketing move.**

This free report has been adapted from Geoffery Moore's e-book, *Think Like a Customer to Market Like a Genius*, © 2010, Geoffery Moore Marketing. The book is available for sale at [www.YourBestMarketingMove.com](http://www.YourBestMarketingMove.com).