

Developing a Business Brand Online

by J. Warholic - Article last updated on: Wednesday, March 23, 2011

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Smart branding means developing your business brand online.

by: [Jim Warholic](#)

B2B and B2C companies need to take a concerted effort online to establish their brands in the market place.

Branding begins at all levels, from the [logo](#) to the words written on a website and the information released in the public market place. Branding efforts should never stop. Just like in sports, teams need to get better in order to compete at or above the level of their competitors, so to in the matters of establishing a good brand image in the minds of the consumer.

Brands can quickly become tarnished with even the smallest of issues. Sometimes, a company can bring it on themselves by aggressively trying too hard to market themselves through negative aspects instead of promoting the positive attributes. In recent times, legal issues can even become a spoiling of a brand image. Take for instance a company the size of Microsoft, that has a market capitalization of \$300 billion dollars, has recently tried to flex its legal muscles by claiming patent infringement of the open source community. Never mind the fact, that they have not filed a lawsuit, nor have they stated what the patent infringements are. While these are legal issues, it is wise to take a look at the impact from a brand image.

I would venture to say that Microsoft probably did not think this latest publicity move out. By bringing up an unsupported claim that the open source community is using patents taken from Microsoft has the air of a big company trying to put the squeeze on the free open source software companies. This reminds me of the neighborhood bully, demanding money from the locals for just being at the community center. [Microsoft](#) is not endearing itself to businesses or consumers by their latest patent saber rattling. While Microsoft's brand is known for all the softwares and operating systems that are provided, they have not considered the long term aspect for what they are doing and saying.

Microsoft has tried to sound very open to various partnership arrangements for developing software in the open source communities. One such collaboration effort was Microsoft proposing a group working with and sharing information about the Firefox Mozilla open source software. See the following article: [Microsoft invites Firefox development team to Redmond](#)

Microsoft wants to help aid in the development of Firefox. It sounds pretty scary, doesn't it? If you're still here, let me tell you that it's not as bad as it seems. Sam Ramji, Director of Microsoft's Open Source Software Lab, has extended an invitation to the Firefox and Thunderbird developers asking them if they'd like to visit the company's open source research center. Microsoft's hopes are that, in a four-day span, the company can provide the open source developers with enough information to get the popular web browser running smoothly on Windows Vista.

Now, if I am involved in some type of open-source software company, would I trust the Microsoft brand? I can't imagine, after this latest incident, that any company would be inclined to work in a partnership or collaborative development effort. In addition, the consumer will question if they really want to trust Microsoft. Right now, consumers might be thinking that Microsoft is the only game in town. But, that simply is not the case. Apple has shown a brand staying power that has made some inroads into the Microsoft territory. Now with the open-source software Linux being able to run on just about every type of computer built, (including Apple hardware) and other open-source software programs that are being developed that provide a means of running Microsoft only applications on a PC machine running [Linux](#) has opened the door for many to at least try out a new software other than Windows.

So it is most apparent from everything that has happened with Microsoft, that their brand image has become tarnished. Businesses and consumers will not likely jump ship immediately, but people have a long memory. If you push the buttons hard enough and tick the world off, it is likely that people will give something else a try. Once a new brand image of a product or service is out of the box, people will remember. This will result in the building up of one brand and the diminishing of another.

Be careful on playing that legal card, your brand image could become tarnished if you haven't carefully thought it out.

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