

## Place Branding ... A Winning Strategy

**C**ompetition is fierce. Buyers have choices. They choose “brands” that promise them something and deliver on the promise.

In today’s “flatter world,” competition is increasing for cities and regions to attract and retain talented workers and businesses that employ them. Talent increasingly chooses place and perception of place influences choice.

Place branding is finding its place in the tool box because it works; it differentiates a place in ways that matter most to today’s worker.

Place branding helps to build community consensus, motivate collective action, inspire emotion and awaken pride ... things that matter to workers who want to be “someplace” rather than “anyplace.”

As brand experts have taught us, there are principles and processes that make place branding work.

### Place Branding Principles:

**Be Purposeful:** Have a reason to invest the time, energy and resources to do it right. Corporate attraction and retention, talent recruitment, tourism promotion and conventions/meetings attraction are common reasons.

**Be Truthful:** You are who you are. Branding can’t and won’t change it. You can, though, emphasize strengths or minimize weaknesses in authentic and believable ways.

**Be Future-Focused:** People aspire for the better day. Give them hope to find it in your “place.”

**Commit to the Process:** It takes time. It takes patience. It requires all voices and views to be at the table from the beginning, even those with whom you don’t agree.



**Be Creative:** Translating how your “place” is different may mean using your brain differently. Creative exercises can pull out hidden truths, ideas and inspirations. Getting there may not follow the straight line you have come to expect in your business.

**Be Patient:** Use a calendar, not a watch, to measure success. The process takes time.

**Be Disciplined:** Place branding requires the discipline to be creative, speak with clarity and do it consistently over time.

**Place Branding Process:** Entire books have been written about the process of branding products and services.

Publications specifically about place branding have been around for a decade or more. A simple web search on “place branding” provides many options.

As for specifics, it depends. What’s the budget? What’s the purpose? Who’s the target? How broad is the effort? How many NGOs are included? Are your elected officials involved? Can you get some *pro bono* support from experts in your market with place branding experience?

These are all factors. There are others. This is an area in which you really need professional guidance - someone who can oversee and direct the process and advise the leaders of the effort at critical junctures.

Place branding shows community caring, cohesion and commitment; qualities that matter to workers who are in the position to make choices. In an increasingly competitive and “flatter” world, it can be the difference between winning and losing to grow a regional economy.

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