

# TOP 5 BRAND BOOSTERS, PLUS 5 BRAND BUSTERS

Avoid the commodity-pricing trap and distinguish your brand from the competition. Here are the top five brand boosters to communicate what makes you different and highly valued... plus five ways that you can unknowingly sabotage your brand.

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## 5 BOOSTERS

### 1. A clear and consistent story.

“We do tax” is a clear story. But it isn’t different. “We saved a client \$10,000 last year by understanding his multi-state business structure.” That’s a story. Share who you are by the experience clients have with you. Avoid a brand based on types of clients or how many audits you performed. You create this brand by interviewing clients, analyzing your competitors and sharing success stories.

### 2. Defining target audiences.

If your growth has historically depended on client growth, it’s time for a different growth strategy. Take a step back and research clients related to your clients, services that could grow out of other services and untapped skills of your people. Identify niches and build plans and goals around them. Take charge of your growth.

### 3. Sharing what you know.

Most of the time, clients are too busy to share what you’ve done for them. Instead of moving into the next project, jot down the general challenges and results of a successful engagement. Collect and use that information to create a short case study, design a clever ad, host a webinar or write a tips piece for an association newsletter. Don’t just promise results with your brand; show them.

### 4. Strategic tactics.

When you sponsor an event and gain an ad or an article, seize the opportunity to be strategic. Make sure that your message is memorable, specific and tied to the overall marketing or niche plan. Don’t just buy an ad or speak because you did it last year. Be selective. Weigh time and money against results.

### 5. Measuring what works.

Every marketing or sales initiative should be measurable. This requires setting a goal at the beginning of the activity so you know how you will measure its success. If it’s a brochure, measure use internally and response externally (anecdotal, leads, referrals). If it’s an email, measure click-throughs to a link. By drilling down to how your prospects and clients best respond to you, you will build upon best practices to create a memorable and sustainable brand.

## 5 BUSTERS

### 1. Ignoring your LinkedIn profile.

A non-existent or incomplete profile is behind the times if you want business. True, LinkedIn may transform into some other tool down the road, but its use as an arrow pointing to your website and highlighting your experience can’t be ignored. Get some training and create a profile that is at least 50% complete.

### 2. Outdated bios and news.

Old photos, unused bios and news that is older than a couple months ago gives the impression that you aren’t actively operating your business. Create a method to keep your website and bios up to date. If your web platform isn’t easy to update internally, investigate a new one. This can be a simple fix.

### 3. Stale promises.

Prospects are looking for reasons to work with you. If they see the same tired promises as your competitors, you’ve lost their attention and potentially a sale. From seminars to your home page web copy and networking, you have less time than ever to stand out. Review and revise how you communicate your difference.

### 4. Assuming what clients think.

Endless client interviews have shown us that most leaders are out of touch with what clients really think. Then they are surprised when clients leave. Stop assuming and invest in some client research to find out what makes clients stay — so you can actively focus on those things in the coming year.

### 5. Talking too much.

Everyone knows what accountants do; they want to know what you’ll do for them. Don’t start with: “We do this, this and this.” Start with: “Tell me about some of your biggest challenges now and what you’re worried about for next year.” Then listen.

# STAND OUT!