

Knights



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*"With competition growing fierce in all industries, how do you stand out from the crowd—and especially, how do you do it on a limited investment?"*

## Branding on a Budget No-Cost and Low Cost Business Building Tips

By: Ray Gordon Knight      C.E.O.- Chief Envisioneer Officer

*This is the ninth in the series of articles designed to help small and medium-sized businesses improve their marketing and sales by **cost-effectively** increasing awareness, protecting their customer base and attracting new business. It is Part one of the series on branding. Prior articles are available at [www.rayknight.com](http://www.rayknight.com).*

Personal and business etiquette share a common thread—you don't accept either invitation and show up at a house or the office meeting empty handed. A key difference is that the business meeting may be critical to the survival, growth and profitability of your business or your company. What you say and what you do need to be both understood and recalled by your host. A simple, straightforward written summation of your experience, services, skills and client testimonials may be exactly what makes you and your brand stand out from the crowd.

But what do you or your company stand for? What is your brand? In this how to article, I will share proven and tested no-cost and low-cost tips on how to develop and promote your brand.

### The Big Picture

Three driving trends are creating demand for individuals and businesses seeking easy and inexpensive ways to promote their businesses: corporate downsizing creating new entrepreneurial startups; companies eliminating market departments or cutting budgets; single and dual income households searching for new ways to generate income to do more than just make ends meet.

With competition growing fierce in all industries, how do you stand out from the crowd—and especially, how do you do it on a limited investment? Four options come to mind:

1. Work with a marketing company that focuses on startups, small and medium businesses guiding them to design and develop your brand and your message.
2. Develop some ideas and content and hire someone with desktop publishing (printing and copy companies offer in house or temp staff) skills to produce your preliminary tools.
3. Do-it-yourself using basic word processing software like Windows Word®.
4. A combination of the above.

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*"Don't cheap out on these basic items- especially the card. Many budget conscious people make that same mistake. You only have one chance to make a great first impression."*

## Brand Identity Basics

1. *Creating your Brand Identity* The first production tasks are a logo, letterhead, envelope and a business card. An additional item is a second sheet for letters or more than one page in length. Focus on the logo first. The cheapest logo is no logo and just a font treatment. No cost options include typing your name or the business name and experimenting with the various fonts in your word processing program. For your other text, select a font treatment (experiment with italics, bold, superscripts and subscripts or drop caps in your font options). Select an easy to read typeface (Arial, Verdana and Times-Roman are all good) and stick with it on all your printed communications and sales tools for consistency purposes. A second option is to search online for already produced logos that can be bought for a song and customized with your name- examples are found on sites like [www.designgalaxy.com](http://www.designgalaxy.com). A third option is invest money with a graphic designer to produce your own custom logo.
2. *Producing your Brand Identity:* Use the Header and Footer options to place your logo and type your brand name, address, phone, fax and email and website (if you have one). Need some ideas? Go to your files or a copy or printer store and mimic what you find attractive. The cheapest way to produce your letterhead is to purchase high quality paper at the office supply store and desktop publish it yourself. Some basic word processing programs limit your ability to use the logo in your envelope production capacity. A second option is to invest some of your small budget and use the services of the local quick printer or copy store. Take your basic content to a printer and ask them to show you some card and envelope options (they will oftentimes produce the samples in order to get your print order). They may charge a small fee to take your content from a word processing program to Adobe Photoshop or another more program designed especially for print and graphic printing projects. Select an inexpensive starter package and off to the next task.  
  
*Tip: Penny Wise and Image Foolish?* Remember, in many cases, until you develop other print or online image and sales tools, these items represent the entirety of your image. Don't cheap out on these basic items-especially the card. Many budget conscious people make that same mistake. You only have one chance to make a great first impression.
3. *Create a Tag Line.* That is the line that follows your brand name. Create a benefit driven tag line that clearly states what you do for your clients. Develop several options and test them with your clients or friends to see what message your various options convey about you and your business and use that line consistently in all communications.
4. *Extend Your Brand Arsenal:* Take your letterhead design and content to create a standardized template for an Invoice, Report, Meeting Recap and you can repurpose that information into PowerPoint or other presentation software to create an integrated look across all your print materials.
5. *Put Your Best Card Forward:* If networking is a key part of your business development strategy, (see KnightLine [The Three Golden Rules of Networking](#)) invest the time to develop a presentation card which is an oversized business card. A 3 x 5 or 4.5 x 5.5 inch card provides you more space

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*"The next items that you should invest some time and limited funds in the production are a Newsletter (see prior KnightLine articles [Newsletters-Do-It-Yourself Marketing Tool](#)) or some press releases (see [Use PR: Create Awareness & Generate Leads](#)."*

to add additional content and graphics to stand out from the crowd. Don't forget that you have the option of printing on the back of the card to. You want that card to stimulate conversation and interest. You can use that space to mention products/services, clients, testimonials or to display an eye-grabbing graphic. In Miami Springs, visit [Mooving Colours](#) on Westward Drive to see how quickly and inexpensively you can produce outstanding quality presentation cards with their digital printing capabilities.

6. The next items that you should invest some time and limited funds in the production are a *Newsletter* (see prior KnightLine articles [Newsletters-Do-It-Yourself Marketing Tool](#)) or some press releases (see [Use PR: Create Awareness & Generate Leads](#)). Other tools include a *Case History* presenting a before and after perspective on your work with an actual client; a *White Paper* that shares your perspective on a particular trend, issue, challenge or opportunity; or your preliminary online branding tools of your *email address and signature* or your first or next version of your *business website*. These no-cost and low cost branding tools will be covered in Part Two of this series.

*Remember: Don't let a tough economy or limited financial resources restrict you in building and promoting your brand. Use your own resourcefulness to do it yourself or to find inexpensive ways to get the job done right the first time around!*

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About *KnightWorks* [www.rayknight.com](http://www.rayknight.com)

Our focus is on [Passionately, Building Business and Brands](#). We work with business owners and executives to implement practical, no-cost and low cost proven business building and business improvement strategies and tactics. *KnightWorks* principal is Ray Gordon Knight, C.E.O., *Chief Envisioneer Officer* who developed and tested the firm's systems and processes over a 25- year domestic and international career as both a corporate senior executive and entrepreneur with experience in over 25 industries. The firm is located in Miami, Florida and can be reached at 305-888-1905 or by email at [raygknight@hotmail.com](mailto:raygknight@hotmail.com)