



Building Brands on Solid Ground

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### **Executive Summary of Billy Ellyson's May Client Luncheon:**

Too often, companies make some common mistakes in their branding efforts:

- They jump immediately into tactics.
- They attempt to overcome a lack of strategy with creativity.
- They fail to address real business issues.
- They try to "tell" the marketplace what to believe, instead of "listening" to the marketplace.
- They stop too soon, somewhere just short of *meaningful* implementation

The array of tactics one could use to promote his or her business is endless. Consequently, many small businesses tend to make decisions on the "well let's try this" basis. It may seem counter-intuitive, but there are times when doing nothing is better than doing something.

Avoid the trap of doing "something" just because it makes you feel better; It's an easy trap to fall into, but you can waste a lot of time and money creating a direct mail piece or developing a logo or web site if you're making decisions in a vacuum.

Choosing not only which tactics to utilize, but determining what your materials should look like is often left up to highly subjective factors – "I like the color blue, therefore my logo is going to be blue!"

The problem is that these subjective factors are not grounded in science, nor are they grounded in the opinion of the person who matters the most – namely, the customer!

Therefore, it is imperative that all companies utilize a rigorous process which is a blend of science and art in order to make grounded decisions, ie: decisions where subjectivity is decreased and objectivity is multiplied.

In my discussion, I outlined Terra Firma Marketing, Inc.'s processes and tools for developing:

- A clear concise brand position
  - A process which not only maps what you want to be, but which also considers the importance the customer base places on these notions.
- A leveraged engagement model which leverages all of the key moments within your business development process
- A Creative Context which considers:
  - Macro factors
  - Competitive forces
  - Purchasers' Environs
  - Influencers' Environs
- A "billboard effect" which depicts:
  - Common visual stimuli
  - Common iconography
  - A lexicon on industry "impact words"
- A Look-and-Feel Manual for your business:
  - Color Palette
  - Language tone
  - Key Messages

Planning documents and subsequent executions of strategies should all be developed using the lens of your brand position and creative context! This rigorous decision-making process will enable you to stand confidently on solid ground.