



VINE Theory

Eleven “Must Haves” for Your Successful Business.

Without these “to dos” you’re company is failing to reach its potential.

By Kyle Dreier, Founder - Vine Theory

For many businesses, adding to an already crowded “to do” list can be a bit optimistic. Don’t be intimidated. There is hope. By simply taking one step at a time, your “branding” plan will begin to work for you instead of against you. The last thing you want to do is *not* take the first step. *Start here.*

1. A clear valuable message.

What exactly are you trying to tell your potential clients and customers? You have worked hard to develop a product or service that they most certainly need or want. Up to this point you’ve been so focused on developing your offerings that you’ve likely lost touch with why your audience needs something from you. What problem have you solved for them? What response do you desire from them? What will move them to engage your services? *Clearly communicate your message.*

2. A specific defined target.

Who is your ideal client? “Everyone” is not an acceptable answer. It’s time to narrow in and pinpoint who you wish to target with your message. What is your bull’s-eye? Who will most benefit from your offering? How would you categorize them? What are their needs? *Keep you eye on the target.*

3. Brand ... it’s not just a logo.

A logo says a lot about your company and sets the stage for what your clients may expect from your company. However, a logo is just one element of your “brand” – which goes much deeper. Your brand includes your message and establishes a feeling and level of expectation. What message does your brand convey? You must build equity in your brand through everything your company does. *Brand everything.*

4. Internet Strategy.

A website is just the beginning of your Internet strategy. In today’s business environment your website is your first impression. What do you want your website to do for your company? What agenda is it furthering? How does it help the sales cycle? Do you know how SEO, blogging and PPC will benefit your company? Do you even need a website? You must at least have an answer. *Be intentional.*

5. Touch Points.

Successful marketing requires repetition. You must reach out to your audience on an ongoing basis via e-news, direct mail, phone calls, events, ... the list goes on and on. The heart of the matter is that your ideal clients need constant reminders of why your company is for them. They need to be reminded that you provide what they need. When’s the last time your target audience heard from you? The biggest challenge

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today is developing effective touch points that don't get lost in the fray. *Be creative. Very creative.*

6. Sales Tools.

Regardless of the type of business you're in, you and your employees (each end every one of them) are in sales. Does everyone in your organization understand what your company is selling and ideally to whom? Sales tools are not only tangible items such as brochures and literature, but more importantly your sales tools are intentionally crafted answers to questions about what your company offers. Are you, and your company, adequately equipped to answer those questions? *Remember, you're in sales.*

7. Educational information.

You know something that your ideal client would benefit from hearing. There is a value to information only you and your company can provide to your target audience. What do you know? How are you delivering your expertise to your audience? Create a fifteen minute presentation on a topic relative to your services. Write an editorial regarding a new trend in your industry. Create a “white paper” on raw materials you use and why you choose them. *Knowledge is power. Exercise it.*

8. Referral System.

You probably already know that the best and cheapest leads comes from happy clients. You knew that, right? Your satisfied customers are a huge asset waiting for your attention. You must quantify the value of customer acquisition through referral. I think you'll be surprised how valuable this is simply by comparing the cost of customer acquisition through other means. Now, with that in mind, you'll know how much to invest in building a referral marketing channel. Do you have a referral system? *Build it and they WILL come.*

9. Client and Prospect Database.

To effectively market to your clients and prospects you must have your marketing lists in order, and, that list should reflect your target audience, not just everyone that has a heartbeat. Research your current clients to develop a criteria for building a prospect database. Additionally, make sure your current client list is up to date. Can you, on a moments notice, provide a clear report of ideal clients and prospects? *Build your lists.*

10. Marketing Budget.

You must define your budget either as a percentage of revenue or a fixed line item. It takes money to make money. Have you considered your marketing budget for the next six months? Take time to make wise and informed decisions by looking at actual ROI of previous marketing efforts and the potential ROI of future marketing opportunities. While not everything you do from a marketing perspective will have a direct cause/effect relationship and ROI, it is important to understand the marketing is cumulative. Doing nothing will produce nothing. Doing a little marketing at time, if done with insight and intention, will add up to over time and move your brand forward. *Plan wisely.*

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11. Professional Advocate

Your tendency is likely to “do it yourself.” After all, it’s that “can do” attitude that has gotten you to this point of success in your career thus far. That can also be your downfall. You must build your business by multiplying yourself and your efforts so that it can grow beyond your individual limitations. Hiring a professional to help you navigate your brand and the marketing of your company is imperative. Be careful not to simply engage the services of someone who may only have technical skills to execute what you “think” you need. Find a professional who is willing to fully understand your business, someone who will be a steward of your budget, someone who understands the need to increase your bottom line and someone who will ask you the challenging questions. *Build a relationship.*

These eleven “Must Haves” are a great framework to growing your company and furthering its brand with intentional direction. Admittedly, this “to do” list is only the tip of the brand marketing iceberg. Each aspect contains nuances and variables which should be custom fitted to your company’s specific needs and goals. As a rule of thumb, it is best to always ask “why” when considering any marketing expenses. Also continue to pose the question of what potential return on investment will come from your efforts.

Not only is Kyle Dreier a “to do” list-aholic, he’s also a small business brand evangelist. With more than twenty years of communication design experience, he leads Vine Theory in providing creative services rooted in sound business strategy. For more information on how your company may benefit from Vine Theory services please visit www.vinetheory.com. Vine Theory - Think. Reach. Grow.