

*"Who says image is everything?"*

Ansel Adams is quoted as saying "There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept." Adams was most likely speaking about photographic images not marketing strategies. Yet many companies today are wasting precious marketing dollars building sharp images of fuzzy business concepts.

Your singular, most critical marketing objective should always be to create more sales. Many small companies make the mistake of spending their limited marketing budgets on image building. Creating a unique and meaningful image in the customers' mind is key but it should not be the primary goal. Building a strong image is a very important marketing component and you should work at it aggressively. However, businesses that haven't made the connection between creating images and selling products often don't do a good job at either of them.

Many times in our quest to build our image we get caught up in using beautiful pictures of smiling families, fancy houses and swaying palms. These images are intended to invoke a "feel" for our business. However, these images are often so generic and overused they tend to be fuzzy, boring or irrelevant in the minds of your customers.

For example, many realtors use photos in their advertisements. If you look closely though you realize that these stock photos, with the snow-capped mountain peaks in the background, certainly weren't taken here in South Florida. This always leads me to think that if the realtor who put together the ad couldn't be bothered to find a photo that depicts the local real estate market, where else are they willing to cut corners? This is a minor point, but are your potential customers thinking the same thing? You bet.

Getting people to know you, through image building, as different, better and special is only the tee up. You still have to swing the club and drive the ball by convincing consumers that not only is your product different, better and special but that it is something that they want to buy. And then you have to get them to actually go out and buy it. Consumption is what counts. In the old days people believed that if you grabbed peoples hearts, their wallets would follow. No more, people now need reasons to buy and even more importantly they need reasons to buy from you. Keep working on your image, but remember, the only reason for marketing is to sell more stuff.