

A large, light green watermark of the Vermont logo is centered in the background. It features a mountain range at the top, the word "VERMONT" in large letters, "QUALITY WOOD PRODUCTS" below it, a map of Vermont with a tree in the center, and "SINCE 1791" at the bottom.

Using The Vermont Brand

Giving your Wood Products
Business a Vermont Brand
Makeover

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Pre Ramble

- If this were simple, we would all make the same functional piece and sell it
- Influenced by
 - Sociology
 - Psychology
 - Emotions
 - Perceptions and beliefs
- Branding seeks to influence these elements

The Ideal Vermont Wood Product

- Solid native hardwoods
- Sustainably harvested in Vermont
- Rough cut from logs in the shop
- Stickered and air dried for a decade
- Selected especially for this piece
- Dimensioned, shaped and formed with hand tools
- Designed featuring details that require a high degree of craftsmanship

Vermont Brand Review



The Physical and Functional Brand

- Quality
- Craftsmanship
- Integrity
- Genuine/Authentic
- Environmentally sensitive
- Natural
- Green
- Visit www.vermontwood.org for details on the brand

Vermont Brand Review



The Emotional Connection

- Nostalgia
 - ‘In some ways the “Old Days” were better’
 - Vermont embodies the “Old Days” for people
- Trust
- Appreciation
- Satisfaction
- Expectations met or exceeded



Your Marketing Must Begin
with Your Story

Branding is all about

Storytelling

What's In Your Story?

- Begin by assembling the facts
 - Your personal journey
 - Your company's history
 - Your products – from raw materials to finished products
 - Your business philosophy
 - The people that work for/with you
- The physical and functional elements of your business

It's how you tell your story that counts

- Your story has to evoke emotion: yours and theirs
 - Use the way you feel about your work as inspiration
 - Fun, pride, joy, love, lightness, Zen
- **Don't:** “We have five people at the shop.”
- **Do:** “You'll find five of the finest craftsmen and women in Vermont here.”
- It's okay to need help crafting your story
 - Every day, more English majors are being trained to help

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Weave Elements of the Vermont Brand Through Your Story

- Your story at this point is from your perspective
 - Your brand and the Vermont brand are both from the customer's perspective
- Make sure people infer from your story how it benefits them
 - **Don't:** "We sand down to 320 grit and apply 3 coats of high gloss lacquer."
 - **Do:** "Run your hand across the table top and experience the silky smoothness of the highly polished surface."

Add Market Filters

- The final step is to tell the story in the context of your market(s)
 - A 25 year old market analysts in New York City will not react to the same text and imagery as a 50 year old empty nester
 - Distinct markets may require different tellings of your story
 - The story is the same, but the language is tailored to the audience

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Caution: Don't go Overboard

- If you aren't careful, it could sound overwritten or flowery
 - Above all, it must be genuine
 - It must evoke pictures in the mind
 - **Don't:** have them picture someone sanding a table top
 - **Do:** have them picture running their hands over a table top
 - In the above, only the underlying fact is the same
 - Engage and stimulate the recipient of your story

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The Basic Story is Now Crafted

- What remains is refinement
 - Making sure the story flows well
 - Logical order
 - Logical thought flow
 - Distribute the emotions
 - Don't pack all your emotional content into one section
 - Edit for the best language
 - Edit for grammar
 - Check the spelling
- Give it to friends to read and comment

Notes

- The story must work in all media, from the written to the spoken word, still pictures to video
- Must work in passive (web or brochure) and active (trade shows and shop tours) environments
- It must be understandable by a 6th grader
 - Keep the \$10 words to a minimum

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Your Story is Never Finished

- As you use your story you will want to adjust it
 - It must be real and comfortable for all the storytellers
 - It may change as customers change
 - It gets added to as you continue to work
 - It may also change as you change
- It is a living story and part of you

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Telling Your Story

Now that your story is “finished”

How does it interact with customers?

- Passively – the story is told when the customer picks up a brochure, visits the website, or sees a report on the Evening News
- Actively – the story is told when you are physically engaged with the customer – on the telephone, at a trade show booth, or during a shop tour

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Passive Storytelling

- Not designed to close the sale
 - Sparks interest
 - Not intended to tell the whole story
- Designed to bring the customer into active engagement with you
 - Make them want to see and hear more
- Begin a relationship
 - The piece(s) they buy will always remind them of you, so make the relationship good

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Active Storytelling

- Told in person
- Fluid, so you can downplay parts and emphasize others based on cues from your audience
- Consistent from telling to telling
- Use humor, but only if you know how
- Practice, practice, practice
- Designed to get people ready to buy

Web Sites are a Hybrid

- Can be passive and active
- Active engagement does not have to be in real time
 - Click to talk
 - Email exchange
- Story should be presented in modules, enabling people to interact with the story by navigating to what they want to see and hear

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Collateral Materials

Stationery, business cards,
brochures, posters, banners, sell
sheets, signage

Every piece tells part of the story

- Color, typestyle, graphics, and/or text
- Recycled paper and other natural materials
- Designed as well as you design your work
- Give people reasons to visit your web site
 - Tell them what to expect from the visit
- Draws on the Vermont brand
 - Address on the business card
 - Brochure paragraph on your location

Graphics

- Good color photographs say “quality”
- Use images that support the Ideal Vermont Wood Product
 - Show someone truing a tenon with a shoulder plane instead of a CNC router operator
- Keep the focus on the end product and the people who craft it
- Make sure the graphics support the story

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Storytelling on the Internet

The Bridge Between Passive and
Active Marketing

Your Web Site

- Pressing a button on your site makes it interactive
- Each time a visitor clicks a link to go deeper into your site, they want something more from you
- Construct your story to take advantage of this dynamic
 - Think of how TV shows lead you from one episode to the next

Tell your story many ways

- Tell your story in one place
 - Make your story modular and navigable
- Weave elements of your story through other parts of your site
 - Reinforce the connections between your story and what you want people to do
 - Come into your shop or showroom
 - Buy on-line
 - Visit a local retailer

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Make the Internet Work For You

- Link to and from other Vermont fine artists
- Optimize for search engines
- Do not require high bandwidth connections from visitors
- Work together with other woodworkers to promote Vermont wood products
- Give visitors the content they want and make it easy to find

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Advertising

Media Selection

Selection Criteria

- Media that caters to a special interest
 - Interior design or architectural media
 - HGTV (Cable TV)
- Media that reaches your target market
 - Lifetime (cable TV)
 - New Yorker Magazine
- Media that reaches a geographic area
 - Radio, local television, newspaper
 - Boston Magazine
- Media that reaches a combination of the above
 - Direct mail
 - Lifetime in the Boston metro



Public Relations

Press Release

- You want them to call you to follow up
- Release to the media you would select for advertising
- Use your story to create a compelling opening paragraph
 - Writers have the same visceral reaction to Vermont that others have
- Make your release newsworthy
- Hire a professional for any serious effort



Storytelling at Trade Shows

Active Engagement

Impact the Senses

- Sight, sound and touch are traditional
 - Customers see the merchandise
 - They talk to you about it
 - They run their hands over the top and work the drawers
- Smell and taste are differentiators
 - Scents that evoke Vermont
 - Vermont foods

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Go Outside Your Space

- Let scents reach into aisles
- Let sound reach into the aisle
 - Music – light, not high energy
 - Nature sounds
- Hang banners above your space
- Use motion to attract attention
- Use Vermont foods and drinks to bring people in
- Don't create barriers to the aisle

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Promotional Sites

Demonstrations, Displays and the
Shop Tour

Displays are typically passive

- Welcome centers, B&Bs, empty storefronts
- Considerations
 - Lighting (daylight varies from winter to summer)
 - Contact Information
 - Upkeep
- Change the display often to keep it fresh

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Demonstrations



- Schools, tech centers, fairs, consumer shows
- Considerations
 - Use traditional hand tools when and where possible
 - Tell your story during the demonstration
 - Tell the story of the piece or technique you're demonstrating

The Shop Tour

- Machinery versus Hand Tools
 - Present machinery as an improvement, not a time saver
- Think of the shop as a stage, you and your employees as actors, and your story as the script
- Focus on artistry, not mechanics
 - Show how a project begins with an idea and follow it through to completion
 - Design aspect is key to adding value



After the Sale

Getting customers to tell your story to their friends and family

Turn Customers into Storytellers

- If you tell customers a compelling story about the piece they bought, they will tell the story every time a friend or relative admires your work
 - Design
 - Wood and other materials
 - Joinery
 - Craftsmanship
 - Finish
- That's why it's critical to permanently label all your pieces

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Demonstration Project

2007 Brand Makeover

- Select a company for a brand makeover
- Run through the process outlined here
- Regular reports to the industry
 - Follow along with your own project
 - Model the process later
- Follow up after re-branding to measure progress and results
- Company will then help others in their re-branding process

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