

# It's Time to Get Personal

Corporate marketing initiatives offer personalized benefits to branch offices

By **Tommy Orr**, chief operating officer, Network Funding LP

**A**N IMPORTANT PART OF GROWING any company is creating a marketing plan that fits its business model. Corporately operated companies likely have internal experts who handle all aspects of marketing, from branding to advertising.

Developing a strong brand, however, can be tricky — especially for companies that allow their branches to work independently while falling under a corporate name's umbrella. This situation requires marketing strategies that follow three main guidelines to ensure the branches will buy into the plan. Marketing plans must be cost-effective, easy and personalized.

To aid in your marketing outreach, create a program in which your company's branches can use corporate-marketing tools easily and efficiently to garner exposure, gain new clients, form lasting partnerships and attract new employees.

Accomplish this by allowing each branch easy access to purchasing marketing materials that are custom-designed to their criteria. This creates a standardized corporate look and feel within all collateral that a branch office can personalize. You should create and sustain a consistent marketing message that addresses your target audiences throughout all your branch locations. This is key to helping a rapidly growing company.

Your new marketing program should also contain predesigned materials, such as postcards, newsletters, brochures, trade-show packages and articles. Your various branches should be able to order these online. Each item should have the branch's addresses and contact information.

When deciding to standardize your marketing initiatives, consider the amount of marketing

your branches do on their own already. Send a survey to branch managers. Ask them about their marketing budget, ways they generate new business and materials they are interested in using.

This will give you a clearer understanding of how your branches feel about starting a marketing program and what types of materials they may need. The survey also allows branch input, which is paramount for your initiatives to succeed.

In addition, the marketing plan must be easy to use and execute. Employees are more likely to respond positively if they know the new initiatives won't infringe upon their calendars.

Create a "stay in touch" program that allows branches to contact their clients and prospects regularly without having to do the work themselves. The branch can send clients' or prospects' information (date of home purchase, birthdays, etc.) to your corporate office or to a marketing partner who compiles and stores information to send out materials on specified dates.

Such a comprehensive marketing program may cause your branches to question its necessity. They may cite extra costs and limited time as reasons to forgo implementing it into their budget and schedule.

Although branches might question the cost and time involved with this kind of program, there are ways to quell suspicions. Allow each branch to participate in monthly online seminars or webcasts produced straight from your corporate office. These are convenient and cost-effective ways to share information and discover new ideas from your branch offices without having to leave the office. Branch personnel can learn how to use the available marketing materials and what strategies and tactics seem to work



best, in addition to addressing any questions or concerns.

When evaluating your marketing plan, remember that effective marketing requires follow-through and diligence. Whether you seek to gain new accounts, hire experienced employees or garner lucrative partnerships, your targets must be touched regularly and be provided with a call to action.

Above all, your marketing collateral should express your company's value and should provide its audience with information that is unique and educational and that promotes your overall image and brand. **!**



**Tommy Orr** is chief operating officer of Network Funding LP, a Texas-based mortgage banker that operates branches nationwide on a net-profit basis. For more information, visit [www.NetworkFundingUSA.com](http://www.NetworkFundingUSA.com).

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