

**IT'S YOUR BRAND, BUILD IT**

House-labeled products from blades to nails and concrete forming tube are great reminders of who is supplying a given job. Plus, in the case of forming tube, you can see your logo from the road.

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## EXPERT ADVICE ON MAKING A NAME FOR YOUR COMPANY

### MATT SONNHALTER, SONNHALTER

Matt Sonnhalter, vision architect at the Sonnhalter agency, has more than 17 years of consumer and business-



to-business advertising account service experience — seven with Sonnhalter with key responsibilities for major national accounts. His experience includes product launches, brand positioning and development of marketing plans.

When asked to name one or two of Sonnhalter's most successful branding projects, he was quick to respond.

"Two of the more successful tools we've helped our clients (manufacturers and OEMs) develop focus on the area of helping make the distributor's job a little bit easier.

"The first is online training and webinars — In today's business environment, it seems that everyone is trying to do more with less and everyone is stretched for time. We have found these online training tools are an easy and cost-effective way to communicate the key selling points of a manufacturer's product/service. They give the distributor more flexibility on when to train their inside sales and counter people.



Helping your customers build their own brands is a great way to build yours.

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When asked one or two relatively simple tools distributors can use to build their brand in their local markets, Sonnhalter reeled off five:

**1. "Paid Search/Pay-Per-Click**

(e.g. Google advertising) can be fairly inexpensive and can be very targeted in the geography as well as the types of messaging/products advertised.

**2: "Service/delivery vehicles.**

Make sure your company vehicles are branded well and clearly communicate your name and contact information.

**3: "Social media.** There are a number of social sites (i.e. Twitter, Facebook) that distributors can utilize to communicate and build their brand with their local customers. These sites are also another great vehicle to hold and generate buzz on specific promotions.

**4: "Refer-a-Contractor** is an easy way to reward existing customers for recommending your distributor location to their fellow contractors/professionals.

**5: "Distributor-branded premium items** — have some inexpensive items you can hand out to customers that have your name and logo, URL and contact information. For example, have some bumper stickers made

with some funny saying and have them branded with your company name — they get your customers to advertise for you!"

Sonnhalter also has specific thoughts on long-term brand building strategies distributors can employ to become local "institutions."

**"Community Involvement —**

whether it is the local rotary, chamber of commerce, city council or the local boys/g-irls scout troops, become involved in the local community.

Education is always a good arena. Offer some type of "scholarships" to some of the local schools or, if they have workshop classes, provide free tools.

**"Referral/networking groups** — get involved in the appropriate professional trade associations in your area. Also try the more traditional business clubs.

**"Blogging** — this is definitely a longer-term tactic, but is a great way for a distributor to offer valuable information (not just selling) to customers and engaging them with the topics being discussed out there."



Private label blades and nails are long-term investments, but can pay well over time.

**PERUSING THE PROFESSIONAL'S BOOKSHELF**

In preparing this article, we asked our marketing pros what books they would recommend to distributors who aim to build their brands.

**Matt Sonnhalter:** *Why Johnny Can't Brand: Rediscovering The Lost Art of the Big Idea* by Bill Schley and Carl Nichols, Jr. "Here is an excerpt from the book jacket: 'The secret is uncovering and focusing on the Dominant Selling Idea (DSI) — the one unifying idea at the center of every brand — before you

charge ahead with advertising or any other type of marketing. The Dominant Selling Idea is 'the thing you do that's superlative, important, and believable, made memorable and tangible — the motivating difference that makes people want to buy you.' It automatically puts you in a category of one."