

## What's Your Sign?

Today with websites, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and email to promote their products and services, does a business owner still need to invest in a sign? Absolutely!

Consider a new study from the Texas Tech Wine Marketing Research Institute and the Rawls College of Business found that high brand awareness is more likely to lead to brand survival than high perception of wine quality. The study tracked the fates of 25 Texas wineries since 1991, when more than 900 Texas wine enthusiasts rated the quality and name recognition of the wineries' products. Researchers found an unmistakable trend: the more recognizable the brand, the better its rate of survival.

With so many brands to consider, Texas consumers tend to put more weight in a wine's cover than its content, the study also suggests. The label serves as a “sign”, branding the product. Branding helps move customers forward from being aware of your product to making a decision to purchase.

Your business needs a sign because:

- (1) Signs are the most effective and least expensive forms of advertising.
- (2) A sign is an introduction to potential customers passing by and lets them know who you are and what you do.
- (3) Even when your business is closed, your sign is working 24/7.
- (4) If designed correctly, your sign will develop brand awareness of your product or service on all who pass by.



Rumbleway Farm is a small organic family farm that practices sustainable agriculture. Mark and Robin Way and their three children operate the farm. They raise free range chickens, turkeys, rabbits, cows and goats. The Ways have identified niche markets which allow them to command premium prices for their meats - organically grown and value-added. Products are sold direct at the farm in the farm store and through their special events.

Of all her marketing strategies, Robin says her farm sign was the best investment. While she fretted that it was too big, or too tacky, the end result was both visually pleasing and good for business. The impact was “huge,” she says. The Ways have branded all of their products by adopting a common layout for all of their labels, brochures, packaging, and even their T shirts; yellow background, black lettering, and a picture of a chicken - all keyed off their farm sign.

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Service-based industries can be difficult to promote since customers can't "kick the tires or take it for a test drive" before contracting for a service. For service-based businesses who are often at different locations around town, displaying your sign at a job site advertises your business to your target market. Oftentimes you can enter into an agreement with a customer to display your lawn sign in exchange for discounts on products or services.



Make sure you design your sign to describe exactly what services you offer and how to contact you. Include both your phone number and web address prominently on your sign.

While not considered standard signs, calendars and magnets can serve as constant reminders of your services when they contain your business name, logo, and all contact information. Signs should be used in conjunctions with your labeling materials, marketing materials and electronic formats.

Elements of a good sign include:

- (1) Your sign is your handshake with the buying public, and first impressions are lasting impressions. So, your sign must project the image you want the public to have of you.
- (2) Sign experts say that few words are best because the average person looks at for less than a second; the size of the letters is more important. Don't attempt to sell product with information on the sign - save that information until customers are in your business.
- (3) Simple color schemes can aid in accentuating important words. No more than three colors should be necessary. When a sign gets too "busy", its message gets lost with readers.
- (4) Two-inch high letters can be read at 50 feet while three foot letters are needed to be read at 1,000 feet. At what distance will customers first spy your sign?
- (5) Red and yellow are the most visible colors, and short, thick letters are easier to read than thin, close ones.
- (6) If you have several colors in a graphic, stay away from multi-colored lines of text or words (they will compete with the colors in your graphic). Black text is better.
- (7) "White-space". This is the surface area of a sign's face that is left uncovered by either text or graphics. The proper amount of white-space is just as important for quick readability as are graphics, text and colors. In fact, 30% to 40% of the sign's face area should be left as white-space for optimal readability.