

Creative, HIGH-END ADVERTISING

TELL YOUR STORY

Use your own story as a competitive marketing tool.

BY LISA A. BEACH

When Lowell International Realty in Coral Gables developed its “We Sell” ad campaign (see below), the marketing team focused on why their customers choose to do business with them.

“Many of our team members have lived in Miami for a long time,” explains Lani Kahn Drody, Lowell’s broker/president. They bring unique experiences to

the table that help them connect people to a home and the community. So, the “We Sell” campaign was all about the concept of creating a home for every family member and the messaging was consistent throughout.

Building the campaign wasn’t cheap, says Drody, who used an ad agency for the creative elements. Expect to pay about \$3,000 to \$5,000 if you choose to go that route. However, says Drody, it was well worth it, especially when customers started contacting them.

The ads resonated with one customer who previously had a small transaction with Lowell. The customer (the CEO of a large company) reached out to Drody. He wanted top executives and their whole family to be supported in their relocation to Miami—and he knew Lowell was the perfect team to handle it.

“Seeing our ads reinforced what he already knew: Our team knows Miami incredibly well, and we take a very holistic approach to selling a home to every family member,” notes Drody.

Drody emphasizes the importance of branding through creative advertising.

Here are her top tips:

1. BE AUTHENTIC.

Tap into what makes you different than competitors. “Find your unique selling proposition and tell your own story,” she says. Dig deep to identify who you are—whether that’s someone to hold the hand of a first-time homebuyer or a slick, cutting-edge firm—and then convey that to the market.

2. TAP INTO EMOTIONS.

Careful branding helps position you and your company as trusted advisers based on a relationship, says Drody. “We sell our customers a lifestyle and connect dots in their life,” she says. “Demonstrate the possibilities of what a kitchen or a reading nook can be and emphasize that. It’s a life, not just a transaction.”

3. COLLABORATE.

Brainstorm with your team to generate a solid concept. Then, bring the concept to a good graphic designer (whether it’s an in-house person, a freelancer or an ad agency) to develop your message visually.



LANI KAHN DRODY
LOWELL INTERNATIONAL
REALTY
CORAL GABLES



GREAT IDEA Make everyday service a pillar of your branding. It’s not just who you are; it’s what you do. Go above and beyond in your communication and support throughout the transaction, and follow up beyond the closing table.” — Heather Colby, chief marketing and technology officer, ERA Grizzard, Orlando

 **23%**

Consistent brand presentation across all platforms increases revenue by up to 23%.
— DesignRush, as cited on Forbes.com

4. CHOOSE A THEME.

“Consider how to convey this theme in different ways,” says Drody. “Done effectively, it becomes a campaign with a longer shelf life.” For instance, Lowell’s “We Sell” campaign focuses on one concept—creating a home for every family member—without hitting the exact same messaging in every ad.

It starts by talking with your team and identifying what makes you unique. “Our ad agency took our messaging and put it into something visually and emotionally stimulating,” says Drody. “It evoked a real sense of what we’re all about.”

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FOUR STEPS TO BRANDING

When people talk about branding, they often jump right to logos and colors. But that’s just a part of branding, says Heather Colby, chief marketing and technology officer at ERA Grizzard in Orlando and host of the coming-soon *Ideas for Real Estate* podcast. In fact, the visuals are the last thing to think about with branding.

“It’s much more meaningful and impactful than the way you look,” Colby points out. Brand is about your company culture, values, customer service and other key factors. “It’s also much more than name recognition. Branding is about the feelings that are associated with your brand.”

So how do you build your own brand? Colby outlines a four-step process:

1. Reflect on your own identity.

“This introspective discovery phase helps determine what unique value you offer,” says Colby. For example, in your customer service, do you want to be seen as more luxury-focused? Innovative? Tech-forward?

2. Define your ideal customer.

Whom are you trying to attract? Millennials? Veterans? First-time homebuyers?

3. Clarify your communication.

Next, define your brand’s voice, messaging and communication channels. Is your tone traditional and authoritative, or quirky and fun? What you say—and where

and how you say it—build bridges with the people you’re trying to reach.

4. Create your visual identity.

Finally, what visuals best convey who you are in a way that appeals to your target customers? This is where you design a logo and choose your colors and images for a consistent feel across your marketing efforts, including social media, blogs, videos, etc.

Colby dispels the myth that branding has to be expensive—or perfect. “There’s an evolution to what your brand might go through,” she says. “But it should always come from a place of authenticity. Be genuine and passionate about the services you’re providing.”

Affordable Visual Branding

Once you follow the first three steps outlined by Heather Colby (right), you’re ready to create your visual identity. If you’ve got the budget, consider outsourcing this to a graphic designer. If you need a lower-cost option, take the DIY approach using free online tools like Canva or PicMonkey. Both give you plenty of templates to guide you through the process of creating professional ads, logos, infographics and other marketing pieces.

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