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It's All About IMAGE



Company and industry image has been a long-debated topic in the portable sanitation industry. When dealing in portable restrooms, a company's appearance, level of service and impression on its customers is vital to building an image that inspires repeat business and referrals, while establishing a reputation in the communities it serves. Constructing that image involves a variety of small accents that work together to paint a picture of a company with which people want to do business.

Living up to the Name

Johnny on the Spot, Inc. has been serving the New Jersey area since 1970 and has since established itself with an exemplary image in the industry and the local community. Behind the helm of the company is second generation President Wm. Jesse Thompson who has learned throughout his many years of experience what it takes to build a quality company image.

"A company's name is important," Thompson said. "Johnny on the Spot is actually a common name, but my mother thought of the name back in 1968, when it wasn't nearly as common. We re-invented the name within our family."

Whatever the industry, a company name is usually the first thing that a customer will learn about the company itself, and therefore tells them a lot about what to expect. Some businesses in the industry chose their particular company name in order to attract customers with the witty turn of a phrase. Others used simple, easily-remembered names. In the portable restroom industry, people have come up with quite interesting company names and logos, walking the line of crude humor and good fun. Others have chosen to go elegant with the name to establish a more proper image of the business.


"Our company name is about as close to humorous or pun as we would want to get," Thompson noted. "It is not too tacky and is easy to remember. Our email addresses are also easy to remember, which is good. People don't even need to write them down to remember them. We don't take advantage of the

industry humor very much but are trying to achieve a more professional company image. Of course we feel the name by itself does not do much to build image. The name plus the consistently high level of service provided over the past 30 years has certainly caused our reputation to improve. In other words, a great company name is not going to do much for it if they provide lousy service."


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What is more important than wit or humor in a company name is the concept of living up to the name. A business name is supposed to represent the company itself, and therefore the professionals behind the name must make a good effort to live up to the name that represents them. For example, if a company name is "Pristine Loos", the company must make every effort to provide restroom units that earn the description of being pristine. If a company is named "Convenient Restrooms," it would be wise to make the whole process of renting a unit as simple and convenient as possible to the customer. It can be off-putting to a customer to choose a company with a catchy, welcoming name and then to find that the service and product offered is simply under-par. In other words, as Thompson pointed out, the service provided is what gives the name merit—not the other way around.

Not only does a company's name affect its own personal image and success, but the entire portable restroom industry can be either elevated or brought down by the way customers view what portable sanitation professionals do and the service they provide. Those who have worked in the industry long know that they have always battled against stigmas and negative images surrounding the nature of the job.

"I think the image of the industry is affected by company names to a small degree," Thompson said. "In the past, when I've seen a company with a bad name on the same page as us in the yellow pages, I've been somewhat relieved because it makes the decision easy. So, competitively I don't mind them being there. From the industry point of view, I think it's harmful."

A company that is proud of their name and can back it up with quality service and a high-standard product should take advantage of every opportunity to promote the name and brand it. This includes using promotional tactics that put the company name before the eyes of customers and potential customers often, such as email newsletters, internet marketing, flyers, advertising and community involvement. When it comes to the internet, make sure to make full use of search engine optimization (SEO) to ensure your company name comes up within the first few pages of prime keyword searches. Get involved in the local community by sponsoring youth sports teams and having the company name proudly displayed on their uniforms. Give loyal customers keepsakes, such as mini-calendars, pens or magnets complete with the company name and logo.

A superior company name is important, as long as management and staff are living up to the name and providing good, quality service to customers.

Dressing the Part

Company uniforms are becoming a more popular trend these days as businesses compete with one another to look more professional in the industry. Most customers would admit that it makes a good impression when drivers arrive to deliver units wearing matching, clean and professional-looking attire. The question is, how formal do the uniforms need to be?

"Johnny on the Spot does provide pants and t-shirts with the company logo for all employees," Thompson said. "We used to

have button-down, collared shirts, but it was simply too uncomfortable for our drivers in the summertime, so our drivers' comfort came first."

In locations where there tends to be extreme weather, either hot or cold, it is important for companies to provide appropriate uniforms that will keep employees comfortable and safe. Still, something as simple as matching shirts make a world of difference in the way the customer views the professionalism of the company.

"Uniforms are important without a doubt," Thompson said. "Customers choose a company because of its reputation. It is not about personal appearance but consistency. Customers come to expect a certain standard from the company they work with. In regards to attention to personal appearance of our drivers and employees, much of that is handled at the interview stage. We look for responsible people at the hiring point and find that eliminates most problems from arising. If someone does come into work wearing jeans one day, he won't be written up. If it continues to happen he'll get a tap on the shoulder and a gentle reminder that this is not the look we want here."

Sparkling Clean

Everyone knows that customers want clean portable restrooms delivered. It is also important to remember that the cleanliness of the service truck can also make an impression on the customer. While some companies have set cleaning sched-



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ules requiring drivers to clean their trucks on certain days each week or a set number of times throughout the week, others have a standing order that trucks must be cleaned whenever they are in need.

“Our trucks are kept clean for a number of reasons,” Thompson said. “First of all we keep them clean so our mechanics don’t have to clean them when they service them. More importantly, a company’s image can be portrayed through the cleanliness of the units and trucks. Our drivers know that they are responsible for keeping their trucks clean at all times, whether that means cleaning them weekly or daily. This is part of our driver evaluation system, and if a truck is found to be in an unsuitable condition, a driver will receive a memo and it may affect their pay raise. Having their trucks clean is vital to their personal success here.”

Clean units and clean trucks go hand-in-hand. Customers will often notice if a truck is dirty and will associate that dirtiness with the units as well as with the company as a whole. On the other hand, if the truck rolls up, sparkling clean, and the driver steps down in his company uniform, a very positive impression is left on the customer.

“I heard a compliment just today,” Thompson said, proudly. “We were arranging to have one of our trucks parked at this local event with a few of our employees there and I promised the person I would have the truck immaculate if he allowed us to park it there. He told me he would never worry about our trucks

being clean. We hear all the time from customers and even competitors that our trucks are spotless. Our drivers really catch on and it becomes fun to do well and to have a cleaner truck than the other guy.”

Overall Image

At the end of the day, image is not only about the appearance of the drivers or service trucks, nor merely the quality of the company name. Company image is a combination of many factors which bring customers to a conclusion about the quality of the business itself.

“Image all comes from service,” Thompson noted. “There is a level of service that provides a positive image. If the trucks and units are truly clean and the drivers are consistently at their appointments on time, it is service that becomes image.

“I have a two-woman team who keeps our grounds and buildings immaculate so that when employees punch in, the standard has already been set,” Thompson continued. “It all translates to image. We received a Clean Business Award from our local Business Municipality. I remember we had applied to the planning board because we were going to expand and they basically told us they would give us whatever we wanted because we were such good neighbors. Even the fire marshal voluntarily came to testify on our behalf. I was blown away.”

Furthermore...

Thompson mentioned that there is another issue in the portable sanitation industry that is currently affecting the image of the industry as a whole.

“What worries me more in regards to the image of the industry are the large discounts being given due to the recession,” Thompson shared. “Every decline is followed by a recovery, but it will take much longer for the industry to recover from these drastic price cuts. The new pricing is a much bigger threat. It cheapens the service in general. That definitely affects the image of the industry—more so than a dirty truck or a lousy company name.”

While the economy is still struggling, companies like Johnny on the Spot are actively working at keeping their service levels high and maintaining the positive images they have worked so hard for through the years.

“We do not focus on aesthetics or image, but on providing quality service and protecting employees,” Thompson said. “It’s all about our employees. We are a team and will get through this recession together. That is very important because if I start cutting benefits or hours, when recovery happens I will have less qualified people, and that will affect our company image.

“Our culture is to care,” Thompson said in summation. “It is the same with any aspect of our company. Every customer and employee will receive the same concern and prompt care. That is image. I sometimes think of image as superficial and aesthetic, but it runs deeper here. We keep things up, but it is not because I am concerned with image as much as consistency.”

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