

Evolving Your Brand, and Your Custom Tap Handles

by Ben Weston, Hoptown Handles

Your brewery isn't the same now as it was when you started. However, you might still be using the same old custom tap handles, marketing materials, and merch. Inevitably, your brand will evolve over time, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It's simply the nature of business. Your point of sale items, including your custom tap handles, should evolve with them. Here are some factors to consider when deciding whether to make some changes to those items.

What is your brand?

Remember, your brand is what your customers (and the public at large) think of your company when they see or hear your name, use your product, interact with your website, etc. It can usually be boiled down to a couple words like "classy, refreshing, and simple" or "blue collar, powerful, and rustic". Before you go creating some new promotion or start modifying your promotional materials, figure out what your brand is, but more importantly, **what you want it to be.**

When I started Hoptown Handles, I didn't know that we were going to be as focused on durability and sustainability as we are now. However, as I got to know our customers better, I realized we needed to pivot. It became clear to me that there was a demand for sustainable, durable, and American-made tap handles. With that in mind, we went about changing our product and making sure that our branding strategy reflected those qualities. We changed our logo, updated our website, tweaked our packaging, and modified our trade show presence to make it clear to our customers what we were all about.

When to redesign your marketing and promotional materials?

Redesigning your marketing materials is not a task to be taken lightly. There can be significant costs associated with making these changes. The last thing you want is to shell out a bunch of dough on new items that you're just going to have to have redone in a few months. Here are some key points where you should definitely consider refreshing your marketing and promotional materials:

- If you're going through a logo redesign or a total brand refresh. This one is a no brainer. If your logo changes, change your custom tap handles, marketing and promotional material. End of story. [Here's a nice article on rebranding](#). I particularly like the visual example of Pepsi's visual refresh over the years.
- Your product has gone through a major change like switching to all organic malts, or going gluten free.
- Packaging redesign. Your tap handles and other marketing material should be representative of what the consumer sees in other outlets.

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Be Consistent

Making a purchase is a risky proposition. The customer is always asking themselves, "what if I won't like it?" You need to find a way put them at ease. Consumers love consistency. If they had something once, and liked it, they are likely to try it again. However, if they get it a second time and don't get what they experienced the first time, they are unlikely to come back a third time.

Tap handles are just an extension of your brand, and should be consistent with the other elements of your brand. The customer wants to know that if they like a beer of yours in a can, that they're also going to be happy with one of your beers on draft. Visual consistency gives your customers a sense of comfort in that if the tap handles and cans are visually similar, the beverage will probably have a similar characteristic to what they're used to.

Change with the Times

Not only is your brand going to change, but the brands and culture around you are also going to be changing. Are you seeing more and more elaborate sculptured cast resin tap handles in your distribution area? Well, if your tap handles are also elaborate sculpted resin handles, you might want to think about switching to something more clean and simple. Are you seeing a lot of white or wood grain handles? Maybe consider switching to a brightly colored handle. It's important to find a way to be different. What used to work might not work anymore. Don't be afraid to change.

Examples of Custom Tap Handle Evolution

Take a look at how some of our clients have evolved their tap handles over the years to better reflect their brand.



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