

Branding 101

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Who Do You Love?

Most everyone has a favorite brand of beer, jeans, and automobile – personally, I’m a Guinness, Calvin Klein, Mercedes kind of guy.

More than likely you can rattle off a list of 10 of your favorite brands.

The question is do you know why they are your favorite brands? More importantly, can you define what makes them a brand? Is it the logo? The packaging? Is it the advertising?

A brand is all these things and more and it is one of Marketing’s most difficult concepts to understand. Why? It is an intangible item, almost a feeling, but one that has real value and great strength.

A brand protects product value and guides consumer choices. It forges a connection with your customers and reinforces their own self-image. Delivered consistently, it will build a level of trust that will increase your revenues and could help your company weather difficult times.

Definition of a Brand:

“A brand is the emotional bond created between an individual and a company, product, or service. It is created through the delivery of consistent messaging and actions around an easily identifiable consumer promise.”

Or, in practical application:

- I believe that Volvo builds safe cars
- I believe that Nike enhances my athletic achievement
- I believe that ESP Online makes me more successful

Touchpoints

Nike, Volvo and ASI understand that every contact with a customer, or touchpoint, is an opportunity to build their brand. Accordingly, every time you interact with their brand, be it through marketing, a store, or online, you will find that the company’s key brand messages are reinforced again and again. Branding is so important to companies like Nike and Volvo that many have branding departments to oversee brand standards and ensure that brand messages are communicated correctly and consistently.

The good news is that great branding doesn’t require full departments or multi-million dollar campaigns to institute.

Branding opportunities abound throughout your organization in little and big ways.

To begin, think about all of your customer touchpoints - like voice mail, packaging, storefront signage and advertising copy. Each of these is an opportunity to build your brand.

It is important however that you don’t stop with just the more obvious, physical items. Your sales and customer support teams are your most important brand ambassadors and, more often than not, have the most meaningful brand touchpoints.

What’s even better, these opportunities are free and simple to implement. For example, is your sales team using brand messages on customer calls and follow-ups? Does your customer support team send the same brand message via email as the marketing team does in its advertising?

When thinking about how you can implement your brand remember this key point. A great brand delivers its promise to the market with every communication. Conversely, inconsistent messages that don’t reinforce your brand promise hurt your image and sales.

3 Action Steps to Take Today!

- 1.) Make a list of all of your current advertising, sales collateral, and any other places where you communicate with a customer.
- 2.) Think about the three brands that you like the most and identify how their brand makes you feel, what promise their brand makes to you, and what words and images they use to reinforce their brand messages.
- 3.) Write down inconsistencies you see with your current brand – this could be anything from changing colors, different logos, varied taglines, or ‘the ad attempt of the week’.

If you’re not sure what your current brand promise is stay tuned. We’ll explore that in the near future.