

The Need for Branding

- If there is any discrepancy between the reality of your company and its perception in the marketplace
- If there are people inside and outside your company who don't understand the values of the company
- If marketing materials don't accurately reflect the mission and values of the company

What is Branding?

- The singular idea or concept and most important corporate asset that we own inside the minds of our target audiences that:
 - Reflect our unique strengths, personality and vision
 - Define a singular, memorable concept that we stand for
 - Communicate a compelling benefit to our target audiences
 - Improve the reach, frequency and impact of our key messages through consistent use

Branding Defined

Your brand is not just your logo, tagline, packaging or the "look and feel" of your ads or website. These are all parts of your brand identity. Your brand resides within the hearts (feelings) and minds (intellect) of your customers and prospects. It is the sum total of their (product, company, service and competitive) experiences and perceptions, some of which you can influence and some you cannot.

The most successful brands will always be those that deliver not only the tangible value but the emotional value as well. The latter will always be seen as the most valuable, because when confronted with two choices of apparently equal benefit the prospect will always choose the one that feels right. The Brand defines the organization; leads to the organization creating the relationships that people value; leads to the sum total of the relationships to build the brand; feeds back into the brand idea that defines the organization.

Building relationships that people (all stakeholders) value clarifies what branding systems do. Experience shows that brand knowledge is most simply networked and energetically actioned where everyone believes in making business human again.

Why is Branding Important?

- The danger of being anonymous
 - Who are you?
 - What do you sell?
 - How are you different?
 - Why are you better?
 - Why should I buy from you?
- The point of it all
 - Branding will create a market advantage
 - Branding will open doors that were formerly closed
 - Branding will make us more successful

- A good corporate brand is a very good thing
 - Great brands cannot be copied
 - Brands endure hardships
 - Brands inspire
 - Brands are extendable
 - Brands motivate
 - Brands create loyalty
 - Your brand precedes you into every selling situation
- Corporate branding is not product branding
 - Corporate branding is inside-out, reflecting a company's core values, mission and purpose
 - It galvanizes internal purpose and pride
 - It is legacy branding. What will you pass on? What will you always stand for? What will you never stand for?
 - It connects with the customer at the most fundamental level
 - It invites affinity and membership with the company's core
 - It gives power and a voice to core values
 - What vision do we share?
 - What do you understand about my life that no one else does?

Why Branding Matters?

- Separates you from your competitors, in a unique way, that is relevant (and motivating) to your customers, prospects and channels - it gives you value and makes you special.
- Enhance your perceived value, thereby supporting premium pricing, sheltering you from low price competition and contributing to value.
- Provides resilience in times of negative press.
- Enables you to launch new products more quickly and cost effectively.
- Remember that brands happen, with or without you. We need to be proactive in shaping the identity and strength of a brand image.

The challenge for most b-to-b companies is to elevate and transform the brand into a true competitive advantage. In developing a strategy for b-to-b brand building, there are five key steps to keep in mind:

- Structure your brand for a clear, unified expression. Many companies allow far too many departments, such as human resources, investor relations, public relations and marketing, to express their brands. The result is inconsistent, conflicting expressions of a brand that muddle the competitive landscape. To avoid the noise and confusion and to create a disciplined, broad approach to brand building, coordinate its expression through an on-staff brand champion. This person's task is to make sure all the company's uses and expressions of a brand agree, generating an unstoppable cumulative impact and a clear difference in customers' minds.
- Strip away confusing elements in your brand. Over time, a brand's external impression can sprout new benefits and features tacked on by individual sales representatives. You need to take a hard look at the impression your brand makes, decide on one or two things to stand for, and throw the others out.

- Find a meaningful difference, not demands that a clear, simple differentiation be articulated. Brands that stand for something have a huge advantage in attention and conversion.
- Mine your current customer base. Let your most committed customers show you what that essential differentiation is. Effective b-to-b branding demands that you capture what's setting you apart for them. Get close to them, pick their brains and research the causes of a high level of satisfaction. You will identify assets you never knew you had that are working hard for you every day; all you have to do is find inspiring ways to communicate them.
- Embrace the future of your brand. Each massive change in the b-to-b sales environment creates unprecedented opportunities. To transform your brand, go beyond what it is today. Some questions to ask are:
 - Can you take a global stance in the new, more mobile marketplace?
 - Can you use Web interaction to build loyalty and grow new markets?
 - Are you using new information sources to refine and build your brand and its consumer relationship?
- Keep your brand in the vanguard as conditions change; don't let it be a laggard.

Internal and external split in a brand

The internal is the part of the company that has to do with the company itself: how well it knows itself, what its values are, how consistently it acts in accordance with those values and what it believes about the quality of its products.

The external part, show how well it connects and relates to others. The better it knows itself and what it stands for, the better it connects with everyone who comes in contact with the brand: customers, suppliers, employees, prospects.

A strong brand is to have these internal and external identities the same. Values, messaging, personality, icons - unifying these will help create a consistent, cohesive brand.