

Corporate Branding “As Promise”

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Corporate branding is potentially a strong tool for realigning a corporate strategy and ensures that the corporation - big or small - is leveraging adequately on the untapped internal and external resources.

Let's identify 10 crucial steps for a successful corporate branding strategy:

1. It starts at the top

- The CEO / Owner needs to be personally involved, and serve as an important check point.
- Build a strong branding team consisting of employees from different departments to support effort internally.

2. Brand As Promise

- All companies have their own set of values, and unique way of doing things.
- Deliver on brand promise - don't communicate something you can't deliver. Ensure that both internal and external audiences understand it.

3. Involve your stakeholders

- Who knows more about your company, than your employees and customers?
- Use 5% of the marketing budget on research, and at minimum, obtain a good picture of the current business landscape from your stakeholders.

4. Empower others to become Brand Ambassadors

- The branding strategy is an excellent excuse to allow management to involve, educate and align everyone.
- This guiding star leads everyone in the same direction, and helps develop the future pathway.
- Train your employees in your brand strategy, they should not only understand, but believe.

5. Define target audience

- Identify and prioritize; a company can't be all things to all people.
- Research your end user; fears & goals... then wrap your brand around what ever is discovered.
- Determine which customer needs are being met, and which have not yet been satisfied.
- What percent of your business today comes from repeat customers?

6. Exploit new technology

- A professional website, is often the first point of contact.
- Submit your website to search engines and industry specific directories.

7. Communicate!!!

- The various applications should be concise and easy to comprehend.
- Don't try to communicate *every* single point at any one time. Instead, use a selective approach for greater impact.
- All applications should be well planned and well executed,

not spontaneous!

8. Nurture your brand

- Remind customers of who you are, what you do, and how they stand to benefit from continued business.
- Write articles that will interest your target market, and submit them to newsletters and websites free of charge.
- Participate in discussion forums where your target market hangs out.

9. Be ready to raise your own bar

- Reevaluate strategy frequently to react to your market.
- Look out for complacency which might affect goal setting.
- The strongest brands are ones which are driven forward by owners whom never get tired of raising their own bar.

10. Protect your brand

- Protect your brand by defining your promise, keeping it, and making sure your message connects with consumers.
- Have yearly training for new and seasoned employees to be familiar with brand (including standards to make sure you are representing yourself consistently, as well as “style guidelines” to govern the use of logos and graphics.
- Give employees incentives and reward them with brand objective in mind. For example, cite rewards tied to customer satisfaction ratings.
- External threats are inevitable (such as one competitor claiming to have better rates than the other etc..) You must fight back. Answer the attacker by demonstrating why YOUR rates are better, or better yet, focus on your UNIQUE product or service.

***“A lie becomes the truth in 24 hours
unless it’s rebutted...”***

Mark Twain

Conclusion:

With “Branding” being hyped as the hip marketing strategy to pursue right now, its easy to get steered off the right track. The best long-term brand protection is to do well and have a great product.