

Successful Branding

Quality Insider Article

Powerful brands can drive success in competitive markets and become the organization's most valuable assets. Wikipedia suggests that, "Brands were originally developed as labels of ownership: name, term, design, and symbol." Today, how brands reflect and engage people and how they define people's aspirations matters much more.

Clarity

A muddled corporate identity can hinder success in the marketplace. A confusing corporate identity can adversely affect a manufacturer's success. In contrast, well-known corporate identities, including graphics, design, and color components demonstrate successful corporate branding. These elements translate into a quantifiable quality control consistency that drives predictable sales processes, including a shorter sales cycle because of familiarity on the part of the potential client.

Step-by-step methods for conducting initial communication audits are critical in the same way a *kaizen* blitz or other lean manufacturing methods are used to evaluate and measure the efficacy of the plant floor. From industrial firms to consumer-products companies, the metrics that determine corporate image affect the company branding as consistent or confusing; it's vital to the sales process.

Strategies for developing and measuring quality-consistent messages (across all communication channels and with multiple audiences) are critical to developing, maintaining, and reinforcing a firm's identity and market position. A few weeks shaved off a six-month sales cycle can result in millions of dollars in cash flow to a company. A company logo, branding, colors, and message that are recognizable to a potential client can be influential in closing a deal. Those responsible for maintaining an organization's corporate image (or looking to expand their communication assessment skills) should work with key identity strategists at least once per year and audit the messages once per quarter.

It's best when strategists have a team of ears and eyes that can be tapped to test the message consistency. There are many aspects of business that are best handled by people with specific expertise. When legal advice is needed, an attorney is consulted; qualified accountants best handle taxes. For marketing direction, meaningful research is important, and when statistics show that color is one of the major reasons for product purchase (more than 60 percent), the guidance of a professional color expert is critical.

Color

Leatrice Eiseman, a leading color consultant for business and industry, helps firms make the correct choices in colors that sell. As stated in *The Pantone Guide to Communicating with Color* (North Light Books, 2000): "The power that color wields is seen at every level of communication: in corporate identification, packaging, signage, advertising on television, billboards, in print media, on the computer, at point of purchase, and in the product itself. Color is often called the 'silent salesperson,' and in many cases must immediately create a brand identity and most importantly, help to make the sale. At the very least (as on a web page or in a print ad) it must create enough interest or curiosity to induce the would-be buyer to find out more about the product or service.

"Color within the business, retail, or personal environment is also a critical factor in creating mood,

image, and a productive atmosphere that elicits a positive, favorable response,” Eiseman also suggests.

Corey Wenger founder of Key-Position, the nation’s only lean manufacturing-based search engine optimization (SEO) firm agreed. “You have to have all creative parties on the same page,” he says. “A cohesive and holistic approach to a marketing strategy essential in developing a consistent message,” notes Roger Meloy of Cincinnati-based Focus Marketing, which specializes in branding outreach efforts for manufacturing software firms.

Words

Beyond the visual components of branding are the taglines and descriptions of a manufacturing company or product. One advertisement can be very different from another; one press release can refer to a product with one description, and another can use entirely new verbiage. It’s critical to wisely select product names, descriptions, and company subtexts, and to stick with them.

“Successful software companies invest in marketing to create an environment where prospects come to them. If you build awareness in your target market and a compelling message, qualified prospects will find you,” Meloy says.

There can be no vacillation in these consistent product- and company-identity messages; “slow and steady wins the race” is especially appropriate in describing the essential quantifiable results of consistent quality branding industrial marketing messages.

Following is a checklist for branding consistency:

- The same logo is used on all marketing materials, including print, online, tradeshow material, business cards, letterhead, envelopes, and public relations.
- The color scheme is identical in all communication materials.
- The product name or service is identical in all communication materials, especially in public relations.
- The branding message, including slogans and key search words, are threaded in all outreach, particularly in web site content.

About the author

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