



Branding

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Building Brand Value Through E-mail.

No matter how you engage with customers—face-to-face or online, through the mail or over the phone—your brand is an essential element that differentiates your company from your competitors. A well-defined brand tells customers and prospects who you are and what you stand for.

Elements of a brand include many things. At the most basic level, brand is represented through the company logo, the colours used and tag lines employed, if any, that evoke the company's essence. Consistent use of these elements helps build a strong brand image. For example, the "swoosh" check-mark style of the Nike mark with the accompanying tag line "Just Do It" is one of the best-recognized brands worldwide.

E-mail and the Brand.

Brand marketing and email marketing work hand-in-hand. A strong brand lets email recipients know that the time spent reviewing messages won't be wasted. And a creative, well-coordinated email marketing campaign can add significantly to your brand's influence. When designed to increase brand awareness and position a company's presence in the marketplace, email can serve to help distinguish a company from its competitors. Email's ability to tailor messages to individual needs can deliver a tremendous boost to brand appeal by underscoring how well it meets customer needs.

One of the common and important aspects of a brand image is a company's logo. A recognizable logo is a critical element to establishing a strong position in the inbox. The logo within an email should always be positioned to be visible within the preview pane.

Most email marketers place their logos in the top left-hand corner of the message. The next-most-popular spot is the top right. But a surprisingly large percentage of companies don't include their logo anywhere within an email message. In developing the creative approach to branding, the use of consistent images and colours that evoke the brand promise should be used across marketing channels. Email campaigns with the same look and feel as offline ads can enhance online results and strengthen multi-channel marketing efforts.

Building Trust Through E-mail.

Trust is another important element of a strong brand position. Trust in an email relationship is achieved when care is taken by the marketer to deliver highly relevant messages at an appropriate frequency for the recipient. Lifecycle email marketing that takes into consideration customers' relationships with the brand—their knowledge of company offerings and the interest they express in its products and services—can add substantially to customers' beliefs that they are well-served by the brand.

An email program integrated with Web analytics can build strong customer trust and loyalty by reinforcing desired customer behaviours. For example, when inactive customers return to your Web site, sending an email message welcoming them back with a special offer can strengthen customer relationships and improve ROI.



Overcoming Media Fragmentation

The fragmentation of media has caused brand marketers to work ever more feverishly at identifying the right mix of channels to reach target audiences. Successful branding reaches prospects and customers when and where they're most likely to be receptive to the marketing message. Highly successful email campaigns do just that.

Truly effective email branding doesn't require big budgets, unlike brand marketing programs that utilize other, far more expensive channels. It does, however, require consistency. By continually and consistently making every email communication relevant and timely, you increase the depth of customer relationships and the stickiness of your brand.

Every company, product, and service has an image--a public perception. The image isn't necessarily what the company, product, or service is, but how it is perceived. It lives, or doesn't, in the mind of the public.

What creates this image? Everything from packaging to PR to word of mouth. In contrast, identity--not to be confused with "corporate identity" or "brand identity"--is how the company, product, or service really is, before its message has ever been exported into the marketplace and the consumer's mind and senses.

What is branding, then? Branding is the collective actions--design, packaging, message, colour, personality, media--taken by a company, product, or service to create its image. This is where "brand management" comes in. Adroit management can keep a brand, and the company, product, or service to which it applies, alive and well. Mismanagement has been known to kill not just brands but entire corporations as well.

To better manage your brand's fate, you need to know what not to do. So we've compiled the following list of branding sins. Ignoring this list of what not to do could prove fatal to your brand-and your business.

Sin #1: the superior product fixation

In our global marketplace, the apparent differences among products has reached a pinnacle of gray--they're no longer black and white. So he who gets to the market first and stays there can outsell a similar product that is vastly superior. With the lines of communication around the globe just a click of the mouse away, a brand can no longer rest on its laurels for long.

To "be better than" doesn't mean as much as it used to. So what you need to do is first, create a brand, and second, ensure that the brand image connects the product to your audience. Successful examples of this are Nike's "Just Do It" and Apple's "Think Different" campaigns.

Sin #2: the "no one can touch us" syndrome

This pitfall rears its ugly head whenever a company reaches any level of complacency. Xerox and IBM are two examples in which each had reached an enviable level of brand equity. But time, technology, and trends didn't and don't remain the same.

Only recently did IBM begin using design and branding to reclaim its heritage, positioning e-commerce with IBM. Why now? Because IBM found its mindshare



Thomas Watson Jr., the son of IBM's founder, stated more than 35 years ago, when he headed the company, "In the IBM company, we do not think that good design can make a product good... But we are convinced that good design can materially help make a good product reach its full potential." Isn't it time we all listened?

Sin #3: the brand called "fear"

If you're overly concerned about what associates think rather than overly concerned about your brand, getting anywhere near branding is a bad career move. To succeed in successfully managing a brand, you need to have a firm belief in your product, a willingness to deliver what's promised, and a strength of conviction. At the same time, the unwillingness to investigate, evolve, and challenge has killed many brands.

Sin #4: ignoring the design and the image your brand conveys

Go into a store, any store, and look. You'll find a gazillion products. You'll also find many great products. But because many of these great products have ignored their design and image, only a handful have become great brands.

What part does image play in the real world of branding? Everything. Fact: Minute Maid found that other orange juice companies were "borrowing" its signature black carton. What once was a point of distinction had now become generic. Add to this the expanding choices given to consumers--bottled waters, flavoured waters, iced teas, bottled coffee beverage and retaining market share had become a major issue for Minute Maid. The answer? Revamp the Minute Maid packaging line. The outcome? Volume sales increased more than 24%, with convenience-store sales exceeding 34%. And when you're dealing with 28 million servings a day, even a mere 1% increase--280,000 more servings a day--would have been considerable.

Sin #5: brand schizophrenia and anarchy

Imagine this conversation: "Oh, you want to change the golden arches to neon pink? Sure, no problem." Not in this lifetime.

Random change is not the same as planned evolution of a brand. Boring, stagnant messaging is not the same as brand consistency.

A good rule of thumb is one laid down by British turnaround maestro Sir John Egan: "Defining the experience that customers want becomes a criterion by which you can judge the design work you commission."

Other points to consider: "Does this effort contribute to our brand image and equity? Does this dilute our brand position? Will this enhance our consumers' 'experience' of our brand?"

Of course, all of this assumes that there is a foundation upon which to build a brand.

Sin #6: the human connection ratio

The frailty of a brand is in direct ratio to the extent a brand fails to connect with its consumer. Every strong brand has in some way become a product that represents what that customer is seeking: ease, convenience, power, stamina, pride, beauty. But in each case, the human factor can easily be missed.



Every product does have, as its end user, a human who is buying the product for a reason. Find the reason, keep it on personal terms, and you're well on your way to avoiding this pitfall.

Sin #7: forgetting where brands live

If you were to ask brand managers where brands live, they might say, "On the shelf with our product. In our annual report. In the people that work here." Wrong. That's how a brand gets built, not where it lives.

Brands do not live anywhere but in the minds and hearts of customers and prospects. The job of branding is to get your product to the point of having an army of believers who stand by the brand and what it means.