

# Building Your Brand

## Overview

Branding is more than just a business buzzword. It has become the crux of selling in the new economy. If the old marketing mantra was, " Nothing happens until somebody sells something," the new philosophy could be " Nothing happens until somebody brands something."

In its simplest form, a brand is a noun. It is the name attached to a product or service. However, upon close inspection, a brand represents many more intangible aspects of a product or service: a collection of feelings and perceptions about quality, image, lifestyle and status. It creates in the mind of customers and prospects the perception that there is no product or service on the market that is quite like yours. In short, a brand offers the customer a guarantee and then delivers on it.

You might infer, then, that if you build a powerful brand, you will in turn be able to create a powerful marketing program. However, if you can't convince customers that your product is worthy of purchasing, no amount of advertising dollars, fancy packaging or public relations will help you achieve your sales goals. Therefore, successful branding programs begin with superior products and services, backed by excellent customer service that permeates an entire organization.

## . The Importance of Branding

One of the truths of modern business is that there is almost nothing that your competitors can't duplicate in a matter of weeks or months. If you have a great idea, you can be certain that somebody will copy it before long. And not only will they follow your lead, but they may also be able to do a better job or sell the

product or service at a lower price. The question then becomes, "What competitive edge do I have to offer that cannot be copied by anyone else?"

The answer? Your brand.

Creating a strong brand identity will build mind share — one of the strongest competitive advantages imaginable. As a result, customers will think of your business first when they think of your product category. For example, when you think of tissues, more likely than not, you think of the Kleenex brand. And when you're looking for tape to wrap a present, Scotch is the brand that springs to mind. Likewise, when your child wants a hamburger, he will often say he wants to go to McDonald's. The reason behind these strong brand-product associations is that these companies have built rock solid brand identities.

"A brand is the one thing that you can own that nobody can take away from you," says Howard Kosgrove, vice principal of marketing at Lindsay, Stone and Briggs Advertising in Madison, Wis. "Everything else, they can steal. They can steal your trade secrets. Eventually, your patents will expire. Your physical plant will wear out. Technology will change. But your brand can go on and live. It creates a lasting value above and beyond all the other elements of your business."

That value is often called brand equity, or the worth of the brand. Brand equity, unlike other abstract marketing notions, can be quantified. For instance, if you owned the Marlboro Company and wanted to sell it, you would begin to value the firm by looking at the assets tied to the Marlboro brand. You would then identify the cost of the factories, patents, trucks, machines and staff." They are worth a small fraction of what you can sell that brand for," says Kosgrove. "The value of that brand is huge compared to those actual physical assets."

The importance and value of branding becomes apparent when an entrepreneur wants to sell his or her company or take it to Wall Street for a public offering or other infusion of capital. It is often the brand that a business owner has to sell in such cases.

## When Should You Brand?

Because of the competitive nature of business today, nearly all industries can benefit from a branded product. All of the traditionally brand-conscious industries, including fashion, restaurants and consumer goods, are being forced to continue to brand heavily — perhaps even more strategically than they ever have in the past. Financial services, which were one of the last frontiers, are even beginning to see the importance of branding by tagging banking packages and even mutual funds with catchy names. Even industrial markets, where cost is usually more of a loyalty building factor, has seen brand names creep in. For example, Tyvek, a DuPont fiber, improbably one of the best known industrial branded products.

Other industries in which branding is a must include:

Fast food

High-tech

Beverages

Packaged Goods

Petroleum

Entertainment

Retail

Auto

Pharmaceutical.

## What Goes Into a Brand?

If your product or service is new or unique, the task of branding is made easier. Since there are no pre-existing biases toward the product or service, it will be easy to manipulate customer attitudes.

More often, your product or service will have been in existence for a while and have direct competition. And if it doesn't, it probably soon will. Therefore, products that

may be roughly equivalent in terms of their features need to have a brand identity that will impact consumer choice.

Brand identity is comprised of:

Pricing - a component of value; higher prices may signify to consumers higher quality, and lower prices may suggest decreased value.

Distribution - availability; limited distribution of a product or service may imply exclusivity to discerning consumers.

Quality - which impacts satisfaction; obviously, higher quality will translate to more satisfied customers who come back again and again to purchase your offerings.

Presence - prominence in the paid and unpaid media; products or services with a high-profile market presence will lead to brand recognition and increased sales.

Awareness - top-of-mind awareness, residual awareness and recognition, which are directly related to presence; the higher your offering's awareness, the better your sales results will be.

Reputation - enduring public opinion of brand character, which is built over time and difficult to change once established.

Image - perceptions of brand traits or prototypical buyers; often represented by qualities the consumer relates to. Like reputation, image is difficult to change once established.

Benefits - consumers may equate certain positive and negative consequences with use of your product or service; these may be warranted or unwarranted.

Positioning salience - differentiation from the competition, which is established by a combination of all elements of the brand.

Preference - a predisposition to buy displayed by consumers who are establishing brand loyalty.

Share of market - increased market share is a direct result of a successful branding campaign.

Customer commitment - loyalty is built through long-term branding and close consumer contact.

# Building Brand Personality

Brands that carry with them a true persona, and the beliefs and experiences similar to a personality make a brand rise to a new level. After all, it's hard not to like someone with a good personality. In matters of branding, a personality helps to humanize an otherwise inanimate object or service so that a prospect's defenses are lowered. An attractive brand personality can pre-sell the prospect before the purchase, reinforce the purchase decision, and help forge an emotional link that binds the buyer to the brand for years to come. In such cases, "you are more willing to overlook flaws and search for strengths," writes Upshaw.

According to Kosgrove, small-company brands usually take on the personality of the entrepreneur who owns them. It's hard, he says, for an entrepreneur to create a brand that is a 180-degree turn against what the founder is like. Therefore, if the founder is a high adventure sports enthusiast, the brand will probably not be the favorite of a conservative investment banker. "A brand is everything that your customers know about you," says Kosgrove. Every contact they have with you helps to build that brand, good or bad. An entrepreneur or founder, to a large extent, is the brand because the personality and the interest of the founder is going to have a lot to do with the way that the company is perceived by others."

One entrepreneur whose personality permeates every aspect of his brand is Nicholas Graham, founder of Joe Boxer. The off-beat, humorous line of boxer shorts and loungewear that the company produces bears the distinctive image of the zany Graham himself, who is best known for unorthodox marketing antics like shooting an underwear-laden rocket into space and holding an undergarments "fashion show" on a transatlantic flight on Virgin Airways.

A brand's personality can offer the single most important reason why one brand will be chosen over another, particularly when there are few product or service features that are different between competing brands. The personality gives the consumer something to relate to that can be more vivid than the perceived positioning of the brand.

The personality, in some ways, is much more real than the other aspects of the brand because it is the outstretched hand that touches the customer as an individual.

Although a strong identifiable personality is not imperative, it can make it easier for customers and prospects alike to understand what the marketer has to offer. Even more important, a brand with a distinctive personality presents the would-be buyer with something he or she can relate to as an individual, a practical prerequisite for success in an increasingly individual-driven marketplace. Personality is usually shown in three ways.

Provider-driven - Provider-driven images are popular with services because there is a greater need to build confidence between the provider and seller since there is usually an intangible product on the table. Brands that lean heavily on the provider image include insurance companies and financial institutions. Prudential's "The Rock" and Allstate's "You're in good hands," show that the brand is trustworthy and their brands reflect the same attitude.

Image of the user - Other brands like to show that the people who use the brands are people that you could be friends with, relate to, or want to be like. Many companies with branded products geared toward Generation X and Y use this tactic. However, these generations are also skeptical of marketers and are keenly aware of when a brand is targeting them.

Image of the product or service - As strange as it may sound, packaged products often take on a personality that consumers can relate to. Whether through a mascot or an animated figurine, products come to life to give consumers more than just a brand to trust, but also a face. For instance, the Pillsbury Doughboy's laugh reinforces that the product will make your family feel good.

## **"BRAND NAME CLASSIFICATIONS, ITS STRATEGIES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY"**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Choosing a brand name for a product or service is so critical that some writers argue it is one of the most important marketing management decisions (Landler et al., 1991). A brand name can provide a customer with a symbolic meaning which assists in both the recognition of the product and the decision-making process (Herbig and Milewicz, 1993). A well-chosen brand name can produce a number of specific advantages including suggesting product benefits (McCarthy and Perault, 1990),

contributing to brand identity, simplifying shopping, implying quality (McNeal and Zerren, 1981), evoking feelings of trust, confidence, security, strength, durability, speed, status and exclusivity (Shimp, 1993). There are even times, particularly when marketing homogeneous goods, where the brand name may be a product's only distinguishing characteristic (Skinner, 1990).

Although branding has attracted considerable attention from marketing academics in recent years, the overwhelming majority of this interest has been directed at products with physical forms (goods), rather than services. The intangibility factor associated with services has led to the suggestion that branding and image creation may be even more critical for services (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1989). Also, while the rationale for branding is the same for goods and services, at least some of the concepts from the marketing literature associated with goods branding may not apply in the service sector. The authors contend that due to the heterogeneous nature of product and services, branding strategies, particularly brand name strategies, used by diverse types of product and services are likely to differ and follow some principle that can be generalized.

## **BRANDING AND BRAND NAMES**

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or any combination of these concepts, used to identify the goods and services of a seller (Bennett, 1988). Although not used in the marketing of all products, branding is an extremely popular practice. However, brand management is becoming an increasingly more complex process. For example, international marketing has fostered the growth of transnational brands, products manufactured in one country and branded by a company from another country (Ettenson and Gaeth, 1991). These brands can be very difficult to manage due to a variety of cultural and communication problems.

For many goods, the decision is not whether to brand, but rather who should brand the product. This is often called the battle of the brands, or, alternatively, brand level decisions. The decision is usually between having the producer develop a manufacturer's brand (sometimes called a dealer brand) or having the retailer use the product as a private brand. Although generic brands (which are actually non-branded products) do exist, their general popularity has been waning for some time now (Lewison and Delozier, 1992).

### **Brand Associations**

Brand associations are fundamental to our understanding of inference making (Alba, Hutchinson, and Lynch 1991), categorization (Sujan 1985), product evaluation (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994), persuasion (Greenwald and Leavitt 1984), and brand equity (Keller 1993, 1998). Fundamental to all of these literatures is the assumption that consumers use brand names and product attributes as retrieval cues for information about product performance. In effect, brand names and product attributes are the links to diagnostic information about the product (Feldman and Lynch 1988; Hutchinson and Alba 1991).

The studies show that consumers have not one but two distinct learning processes that allow them to use brand names and other product features to predict consumption benefits. The first learning process is a relatively unfocused process in which all stimulus

elements get cross-referenced for later retrieval. This process is backward looking and consistent with human associative memory (HAM) models (Keller 1993, 1998). The second learning process requires that a benefit be the focus of prediction during learning. It assumes feature-benefit associations change only to the extent that the expected performance of the product does not match the experienced performance of the product. This process is forward looking and consistent with adaptive network models (van Osselaer and Alba 2000). The importance of this two-process theory is most apparent when a product has multiple features.

## **Brand equity and recall**

The concept of brand equity has been the subject of a number of studies and has been viewed from a number of perspectives. It has been described frequently as the value a brand name adds to a product. That value can be a halo extending beyond the current product category to other product classes. Generally, brand equity results from all the activities needed to market the brand. Therefore, it can be viewed in terms of the brand-focused marketing effects of those activities. It has received a great deal of attention recently for several reasons, the foremost of which is the increasing strategic pressure to maximize marketing productivity. That pressure yields managerial attempts to gain advantage by increasing efficiency. In addition, references to marketing success based on synergy, consistency, and complementarity (Park and Zaltman, 1987) have tended to support a deeper understanding of the underlying components of products, and have awakened marketing managers to survival opportunities in an era of flat markets, increasing costs, and greater international competition. Some authors have focussed on the financial aspects of brand equity, more pertinent to determining a brand's valuation for accounting, merger, or acquisition purposes. Others have focussed on the consumer behavior effects specific to a particular brand. For marketers, the consumer effects are the appropriate focus and include a number of cognitive effects.

Various authors have described brand equity in terms of components of brand knowledge. Of all the definitions, the most relevant treats it as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand (Keller, 1993). Brand equity represents a condition in which the consumer is familiar with the brand and recalls some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations. This definition focusses on the individual consumer and the consumer's reaction to the marketing of a particular product. In addition, Keller describes what consumers know about brands and what such knowledge implies for marketing strategy. Keller (1993) conceptualized brand equity using an associative memory model focussed on brand knowledge and involving two components, brand awareness and brand image, described as a set of brand associations. Consumers who are able to recall a brand name without aid achieve a high level of brand awareness, often termed unaided recall. In this situation, the associative model of memory would describe the strength of association of a brand name with a situation as strong. In the classic consumer behavior model, consumers who recognize a problem and engage in internal search can use unaided recall to generate alternative product choices, or even to engage in routine product choice. Because recall determines which alternatives are generated, those not recalled cannot be part of the consideration set of products, the subset of products that receive serious consideration for purchase. Thus, for many products, brand recall is critical for success.

## **Brand Name selection**

A principal component of branding is the selection of a brand name. A commonly used definition of a brand name is that it is the component of a brand, which can be spoken or verbalized (Bennett, 1988). It can contain words, numbers or letters. Most introductory marketing textbooks recognize that a good brand name should also have several properties. A short crisp brand name is usually preferred over longer more complex names. It should suggest benefits or qualities associated with the product. A good brand name should be easy to spell, pronounce and remember. It also should be distinctive and free of any negative connotations.

As was mentioned earlier, brand name research has garnered some interest from academic marketing researchers. One study found that subjects felt computer-generated words sounded more appropriate for some products than they did for others (Peterson and Ross, 1972). Zinkhan and Martin (1987) found that “based on product name alone, customers form instant, nonneutral attitudes about the product that may prove difficult to change through the use of subsequent communications” (p. 170). The brand name itself can also influence the degree and nature of the information which consumers are able to recall from memory (Myers-Levy, 1989).

Several other researchers are beginning to explore the use of alpha-numeric brand names, those using one or more numbers in the name (Boyd, 1985; Pavia and Costa, 1993). Based on the research in this area, it appears that alpha-numeric brand names are more appropriate for some types of products. Functional, high-tech, and futuristic products are particularly good candidates for this naming alternative (Pavia and Costa, 1993).

An examination of the branding literature reveals that branding terms and concepts are different for different category of products and services. For example, since services are intangible and therefore cannot be transported, the battle of the brands (manufacturer vs. dealer vs. generic brands) is not directly applicable to the vast majority of services. Other branding terms and concepts which have limited applicability to the marketing of products and services include line family branding, family packaging, brand extensions, and fighting brands.

The debate here concerns the applicability of individual branding in the field of marketing of goods and services. Although Onkvisit and Shaw are correct when they note that some service providers are able to launch and manage several distinctly different brands, Berry et al. are also correct since these different brands are essentially different organizations, at least to the consumer. In these cases the organizational name is still the brand name to prospective consumers (eg: TATA).

If Procter & Gamble decides to launch a new brand of some type of supermarket product, it can usually be supported by the company’s established retail sales-force. However, if Holiday Inn decides to introduce a new brand of hotels, a distinct organization must be created to manage that effort and to keep the new brand’s image distinct from Holiday Inn. When real estate and facility design expenses are added into the picture, the costs may prove to be too high. Also it is being learned that probably few multiple branding strategies exist in services. Most small firms simply cannot afford to manage two different and a separate entity, launching different brands is probably not possible for financial reasons.

For many smaller firms, a geographical brand name may be an advantage. It may help connect a smaller firm to the market it serves better than a less connotative

“nationally appropriate” name might.

However, Berry et al. (1988) do identify four properties which a good brand name should possess: *distinctiveness, relevance, memorability and flexibility*. The meaning of “relevance” and “flexibility”, however, may be very different depending on the size and geographical scope of the firm

## BRAND NAME CLASSIFICATION

**Descriptive brands:** the name describes a key benefit or aspect associated with the product and services (UJALA).

**Person-based brands:** with this approach the product and services are identified by the names of owners, partners or key individuals (ADAG group). Very commonly used by attorneys and physicians (HANEMAN), celebrity named perfumes., etc.

**Associative brands:** this type of branding uses fabricated words, or words that do not normally have meaning in this context, and then uses promotion to forge them into an identity (AIRTEL, IDEA,FA etc).

**Geographic brand names:** this strategy can be used in several different ways. One approach uses local or regional folklore to create a “down home” feel for the product or service. Another variant of this strategy is to use words like “INDIAN” or “US” to provide a patriotic appeal. Finally, distant geographic names can be used to create an exotic image. Examples include, American Airlines, Asian paints, AIR INDIA etc.

**Alpha-numeric brand names:** this approach uses the combination of letters and numbers (either in numerical form or in script) to describe a product service brand. Sometimes used because numbers have connotations different than words. Commonly used by banks, examples of this strategy are First Security Bank of Tennessee, Third National Bank.(foreign brands)

# Marketing Branding Strategies

Someone comes to marketing branding strategies, the most important factor relative to the success of the company and the management and support. Entrepreneurs Only the good son to pay for the service on board and do not inform your strategy is the overall vertical and horizontal organization; there is fire strategy will not work.

In other words, If you reduce the company's culture, the ability to send specific messages to get all employees to create a border sign of the vehicle speed. So you have strong brand identity systems, creative use of visuals and everything with an attractive and catchy slogan. Without these critical factors cannot be put on a baking the cash, pay them good-bye Brand Strategy Consultants.

Someone is already making it the top mark, while others falter on the road? Suppose that such strategies do not work professional brand marketing, the main reason for the mediocrity of Division, is often found wrong with the line of communication. The team is not known a couple of Core Brand Strategy All employees of another organization. It was all up to you, and guide staff and the paragraph does not, just let them know what it can do. Thus, the work cannot put your heart and soul in the light of the tasks, because they do not know how their work fits well in general.

Now we're talking about marketing branding strategies, not many people know that brand strategy and marketing of the child hero of two kettles of fish. The brand strategy has never created the piece during the Service Forum, the service under paragraph forums, and the presence of some company and will not communicate with their customers, clients and prospective clients.

Another important thing to take note of the brand strategy and market competition rather than a blind developed an incredible rate and this affects the customer perception of brand Dunham. Unfortunately, some maintain a distinction between goods of the service you need to upgrade instead of placing the product on a regular basis. Positioning, and no doubt a powerful marketing tool, but you should not blind one to other differentiation. This means that the piece on top means staying in the game you have to take a subtle and complementary approaches as dictated by the child's experiences and needs of the client's brand and TV.

Chat with the nature of your business, as its brand marketing strategy, you must also include the transfer of culture. Yes, but in its own commitments, the bank's customers are often indelible mark and the eel is spreading around the same time telling a story you do. This would result in a larger company.

For example of marketing branding strategies, you can even buy an inexpensive electrical device Dunham shop in my neighborhood. A few days later, the

management team to maintain, he called me and said how you feel the item and there were some problems with it. Interrupted before he remembered to call me I have problems. Wow, I thought it was the brand strategy and high level!

## Marketing and branding strategy for market competition

Effective marketing and branding strategy includes a variety of strategies, including online marketing, social media and advertising, but without a strong brand strategy, the marketing efforts will not succeed. Brand strategy is the basis for a successful marketing campaign that will give meaning and content so that the message reaches the target audience. Branding is the entire message to prospects and customers to your business. This return to the, mission, logo, slogan, style, customer service and perception of people rolled into one. What your company does not create loops, or branding.

When it comes to stand out among its competitors, some things are just as important as brand strategy. Solid brand is always weaving in all the letters and business practices that position the head of clients and prospects. If they see a particular image, especially to hear the message, or even see a certain color combination that comes to mind their own business. This is your best branding strategy.

### Achieving competitive advantage in brand strategy

Competitors may fight in your niche, even though the customers. They have the same products, and even have a similar style of customer service, but you can still play better than them and win the loyalty of paying customers, they focus on creating marketing and branding strategy in the minds of the audience. Even if your company to compete with larger companies for bigger budgets, you can climb to the top of the niche in which the brand will be a focal point for your business.

Not only solid brand can not force customers to choose their company over another, but it is also possible to increase the money you're willing to spend on their

products and services. The company, which is consistent with the brand strategy to increase the perceived value to customers and the company a step above the others, that they are willing to pay more for added value. Cohesion is an important strategy, but more important is that the brand connects on an emotional level with the audience. Loyal customers are created when you get a connection or affiliation with the company you are, and they affect them personally.

As a brand strategy is extremely important to the success of a business that makes sense to contribute time and money to create the best possible strategy. Consider enlisting the aid of marketing experts who understand your audience and see what it takes to develop and promote the brand to all your business communications and everyday functions. A good brand is much more than a logo or slogan, therefore, more knowledge is needed as a graphic designer or the Advertising Professionals can provide.

Think of marketing and branding strategy is the lifeline of your business, go through each component, how to greet customers, how they package the product. So get professional marketing solutions that take a holistic approach to marketing it.

## Successful Brand Development

Many companies are utilizing fractured or unbalanced marketing plans that don't focus on strengthening their corporate brand. Learn how one successful branding & design firm helps their clients to develop successful branding strategies.

Being heard amid the roar of your competitor's voices is a daunting task in today's crowded marketplace. We find this to be shockingly true each time we read a magazine, watch the television, or surf the web. As a result, businesses are now seeking new and more effective ways of increasing brand awareness and more

importantly, create brand loyalty. One of the most important tasks involved in ensuring a brand's success, is to develop an effective branding strategy.

To successfully position your brand above your competitor's continuing fight for your customers, you must develop a brand proposition that when conveyed in marketing and advertising campaigns, will provide an attractive, unique, and relevant message to current and potential customers. In addition, this proposition must be realized and consistently echoed by senior executives, customer support, R&D teams, marketing staff, sales staff, and strategic partners.

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of an effective brand development process and is not meant to be comprehensive or represent strategic brand development in its entirety.

## Why is Successful Branding So Important Today?

Though brand development is by no means a new idea, today consumers have more access to information and more choices than ever before. The result is higher expectations, and the brand's message must captivate the consumer immediately. Companies seeking to experience long-term success will have to create the most compelling, relevant, and consistent brand experiences for their customers.

Remember: "You can't escape your brand. Either you make the customer experience, or it gets made without you." Prophet Corp.

In order to successfully develop the most effective branding strategy, a firm understanding of what a brand is must first be answered.

## The Brand Is Everything

Scott Bedbury is a leading branding consultant that has worked closely with companies like Nike and Starbucks, has written a book titled, "A Brand New World", published by Viking Press. In it he gives excellent thorough definition of what a brand is.

“A brand is the sum of the good, the bad, the ugly, and the off-strategy. It is defined by your best product as well as your worst product. It is defined by award-winning advertising as well as by the god-awful ads that have somehow slipped through the cracks, got approved, and, not surprisingly, sank into oblivion. It is defined by the accomplishments of your best employee—the shining star in the company who can do no wrong—as well as the mishaps of the worst hire that you ever made. It is also defined by your receptionist and the music your customers are subjected to when placed on hold. For every grand and finely worded public statement by the CEO, the brand is also defined by derisory consumer comments overheard in the hallway or in a chat room on the Internet. Brands are sponges for content, for images, for fleeting feelings. They become psychological concepts held in the minds of the public, where they may stay forever. As such you can't entirely control a brand. At best; you only guide and influence it.”

## The Brand's Creed

The development of a branding strategy must begin with identifying the brand's (the business') core values. These are qualities which an organization deems most important. For instance, an organization or business may identify its core values to include: honesty, integrity, excellent communication, and client satisfaction.

Though these values are usually never revealed to the public, they are evident in every aspect of the organizations' business routine, from customer service, to direct marketing, to website design, to teleconferences, to the treatment of its employees and strategic partners. This conveys a consistent perception to the target audience in every medium of communication that is used.

Consideration for these values should not be taken lightly for these values represent the “creed” for the business and become the cornerstone for developing the brand's proposition. And though the brand's proposition may change from time to time, the brand's core values should never change.

Great Strategy Begins with Great Research Once the brand's core values have been identified, the road towards effective brand proposition development begins. To ensure a successful outcome, comprehensive and objective research involving at the minimum, the brand's strengths and weaknesses, the target audience, and the competition will be conducted. If the resources are available, research should also involve extensive observation into the brand's industry, its history, the current market picture, and potential growth and direction.

# The Target Audience Holds the Keys to Your Brand's Success

If I had to choose only one area of research to focus my efforts on, it would be to identify first who the target audience is and second, what their needs and desires are. This information should be as comprehensive and exact as possible. Applicable factors such as; age, gender, income, and shopping habits (online and off) are good places to start. Of course if your target audience is another business, your research will involve different factors.

Truly understanding your target audience, in addition to having a realistic assessment of what your product offers, is invaluable in assisting you in the development of a successful brand proposition. This information will also provide insight into how to convey this message in an engaging, relevant, and consistent manner.

Some questions to consider during this process are: who is your target audience (be specific & use more than one example if applicable), what does the target audience currently need and desire? What does your competitor currently offer? How does your products/services fulfill this need better? What needs or want may be fulfilled by your product or service that isn't currently being offered to them? If your competitor offers a similar product/service, how is yours better? Do your advertising campaigns provide a more engaging, unique, and consistent message than those of your competitors?

## Developing a Brand Statement (Brand Proposition)

From the research, development of the brand statement, often referred to as a brand proposition, commences. The brand statement is a promise. It states that if you use our services / products, we promise that this or that will occur, whether it is the satisfaction from wearing well designed clothing, to the comfort of choosing the services of particular financial planner.

The brand proposition must be clearly understood, engaging, presented in the right context for relevancy, and offer a solution to the target audience's current wants and needs.

"Dude Your Getting a ....."

An example of effective brand positioning can be found in a well known computer company's line of television commercials. The commercials successfully convey the brand's statement that goes something like this; if you buy our PC's, we'll customize the computer to fit all your needs, you'll have access to our award

winning customer service, you'll have less hassle to worry about, and best of all, you'll be cool.

The brand's promise is easy to understand, engaging, unique, relevant (to the target audience), and consistent.

## A Promise Is a Promise

Of course all of these promises are just that, promises. If the company's products, services, and customer support didn't support these promises, the initial surge of new customers would quickly come to a screeching halt and the brand would fade into obscurity along with the company.

Providing a Brand Proposition that is engaging, is easily understood, and offers an emotionally positive solution to needs and desires only serves to enhance the current customers' perception of the brand and will get new customers to look your way. Following through with an excellent product/service and customer support will put an indelible mark in the memory of your existing customers; one that will create brand loyalty through good and bad times; a sure sign of a brand's strength.

## Deliver the Unexpected

When developing a brand proposition, never let your brand's promise be one that is already expected; this is a sure way to NOT stand out from your competitors. Advertising efforts that utilize adjectives like "good", or "nice" are sure to fail when seeking to be both engaging and unique.

How many times while driving, have you seen restaurant or dry cleaning signs, that announce "good Chinese food", or "good dry cleaning service"? The answer is probably more times than you can count. These businesses are able to survive because they are often the only game in town. But for businesses and organizations that are competing for a larger market, this type of advertising is sure way toward obscurity.

Remember, you must convey an engaging, unique, relevant, and consistent message to your target audience. Consumers already expect "good service" from you. This isn't an engaging message nor is it unique. This message doesn't lead towards a strong positive emotional relationship.

## Winning their Hearts and Minds

An important aspect of brand development is to create a positive emotional attachment to the brand which creates a response in its audience without the audience seeing the product or directly experiencing the service. Again from

Bedbury's book; "think Godiva chocolates for a moment: the very name, perhaps even the logo, conjures up an image of sinful indulgence. Yes, it represents chocolate or ice cream, but it is the feeling and the anticipation of that feeling that the brand conveys most compellingly."

Positive emotional bonding comes from a mutually beneficial relationship built on intrigue, trust, understanding, and support. These are qualities that often separate colleagues from friends, and friend from family. Build your brand promise on the basis that your product will deliver positive, relevant, and unique emotional qualities.

And of course these qualities will be dictated by the current needs and desires of your target audience.

This may be the most difficult and often overlooked aspect of successful brand development. This is also where a lack of comprehensive research into identifying the target audience's needs and desires can either make or break an attempt at developing a positive emotional attachment between the brand and its audience. If not done effectively, a seemingly insurmountable communication gap will develop between the internal brand perception and the audience's actual perception.

Your brand proposition should convey a message that is:

1. Aligned with the brand's core values
2. Clear, Engaging, Unique, and Relevant to your target audience
3. Able to incorporate an element of positive emotional attachment that is better than just "good"
4. Echoed within your business, internally and externally
5. Consistent across multiple marketing and advertising mediums (print, online presence, etc)
6. Continually reinforced within the organization so that your employees consistently deliver what is promised
7. Echoed by strategic partners
8. Able to adapt to a changing marketplace