

Marketeting

Tools and tactics for the business-to-business expedition

Branding (brand'in) v. manage, implement, extend, fulfill a brand

Branding action steps

Ask your company leadership to endorse the new brand and declare that living up to the brand is SOP.

Formally introduce the brand internally so that it is embraced as an integral part of the business.

Create an identity standards guide for all to refer to when implementing, applying, and reproducing the brand.

Assign a keeper of the brand to:

- see that the brand is implemented properly and consistently
- ensure associates live up to the brand promise
- be the go-to person for questions and assistance
- enable the channel to comprehend and champion the brand
- ensure that vendors are applying and reproducing the brand according to the identity standards

Integrate the brand message consistently in every possible context for a deep and broad impression. This includes branding new products and services so they are clearly linked to the overall brand concept.

Create a plan to introduce the brand and build mind share with ongoing communiqués:

- allies, partners, channels
- current and past customers
- prospects
- industry groups and media

Keep a facsimile of every application of the brand.

Monitor the brand for potential updates or additions.

The effort has been made to develop your new brand. So, the work is done, right? Oh no!

Now it's time to manage the brand! There's launching the brand internally, standardizing and implementing the brand, extending the brand, fulfilling the brand, and building brand awareness. Brand management is perpetual.

Promise vis-à-vis experience

One of the main reasons for creating a brand is to claim or promise that your company, product, and/or service will provide more value or satisfaction than any other. Have you ever had a circumstance, though, where such a claim isn't actually what you experienced when you made an inquiry or purchase? A brand must go well beyond a tag line; the people with whom you come in contact should walk the talk.

This *Marketeting* issue provides recommendations for implementing your brand identity as well as ways you can encourage and enable your organization to fulfill its brand promise. If these guidelines are followed, chances are, when a customer or prospect encounters your company, its brand distinction will be apparent.

Brand dissection

A brand consists of two realms. They are A: the surface of the brand and B: the concept (i.e., meaning) of the brand.

The surface of the brand includes the visual and verbal parts of the brand. That is, the tangible components of the identity: logo, logotype/name, brand message/tagline, color scheme, typography, and motif.

The concept or meaning of the brand is the exclusive offering it claims or promises to provide. Say your

brand promise is based on offering the best warranty in the industry. Then, everyone in your organization must understand and support this promise. Whether it's making/providing the absolute best product/service or handling warranty claims as expeditiously as possible, all associates must help live up to the brand concept.

Blessings from above

Savvy business leaders understand that brand is as important as any other aspect of the enterprise such as quality, technology, productivity, and innovation. A business that has a clear brand position and offers branded products and services stands a much better chance of commercial success these days. Perhaps this is why business schools offer such programs as an MBA in Brand and Product Management. So, ask your CEO to endorse the brand message and position and let all the associates know he/she is behind it 100%.

Launch the brand internally

When it comes to launching a brand, don't overlook your associates. An internal brand launch will enable team members to grasp and support the brand. Formally introduce and expound on the brand strategy so it is understood by all associates to be an integral part of the business. This will encourage all to embrace and exemplify the brand. Ideally, everyone in your organization will help implement the brand properly and keep it alive and meaningful.

Talk the talk and walk the walk

Basics such as making sure all are referring to the company and its products/services by their brand names are crucial. As well, consistently

using the brand language shows your company is serious about its promise.

If your brand distinction is based on excellent customer service, you must make sure that everyone in the organization, not just customer service, does everything to live up to this promise. Whatever the focus of your brand, it should drive the way your company thinks about, acts upon, and delivers its product/service.

Protecting your investment

Your company has made a considerable investment in its brand. So, assign the keeper-of-the-brand role to a marketing associate who will ensure the brand is implemented properly and consistently. This special function will greatly increase the likelihood that the integrity and objective of the brand will stay intact. In addition to your associates knowing who the go-to person is when it comes to brand-related needs, it also makes the statement that the brand is important and requires proper attention.

Immediately start using the trademark symbol (TM) or service mark symbol (SM) with your new brand identity to show you are claiming rights to the mark. Once you are able to register your trademark or service mark, you will be able to use the registered trademark/service mark symbol ®. Visit www.uspto.gov or consult a patent and trademark attorney on the overall trademark/service mark process.

Brand keeper (aka brand police)

While not the most flattering label for marketing associate(s), the ‘police’ essentially preserve and protect the brand. Just as we protect our intellectual property, we must guard the integrity of our brand. The brand police make sure the design of the logo/logotype is never altered. They will see that the appropriate color scheme and typestyle are being used in all forms of communications.

In addition to the visual identity, the verbal components of the brand require vigilance. The brand message contains language that should be woven throughout written and oral communications with all your audiences, by all team members.

Monitoring how the individuals in your organization are living up to the brand claim or promise is another area of responsibility for the brand keeper. An

ear must always be out for whether the specific quality that has been defined as your company’s distinction—conveyed through the brand message—is infused into interactions with your audiences. If the brand is based on innovation, are your associates continually suggesting ways to be innovative? And are they reminding everyone they talk to that the reason they should do business or continue to do business with your company is due to this distinction?

Standards to clarify and verify

We really can’t expect people to know how to properly apply an identity if there are no guidelines to follow. A brand identity standards guide is a document that will help the brand keeper direct associates and vendors in the proper use of the logo and other elements of the identity. The fact that this standards guide exists indicates the brand identity is revered and that following the guide is a standard operating procedure. Ask the company leadership to endorse the brand identity standards guide.

Live up to these standards

It makes practical sense to have a brand identity standards guide developed. Besides ensuring continuity, identity standards will streamline design decisions when associates are applying the identity to various communications. A basic standards guide should cover:

- **Logo (icon)/logotype** (stylized name)—horizontal and vertical arrangements, standard sizes, control area, and brand message (tag line) and signature lockups
- **Typography**—font family, specifications, and examples of use
- **Color scheme**—color specifications
- **Common applications**—business cards, stationery, forms, and emails

Other applications that should be addressed in the standards guide include literature, signage, packaging, PowerPoint, and photography/illustration.

Ready to use

Your brand identity was most likely created on an Apple computer in Adobe software. Most businesses use personal computers (PC) with software intended for such functions



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as accounting, database management, engineering, etc. Printers, signage companies, exhibit houses, online and traditional publications, and other vendors will require your identity artwork in a particular electronic file format. So, once your identity has been developed, it should be converted into various applications and formats for both Apple and PC platforms. This will enable you to readily supply the identity to any vendor in the format they prefer.

The whole brand family

Once your entity has been branded, its existing products/services should be brought in line with the company brand concept to become an integrated, cohesive branding system. Coordinating names and logotypes is the place to start. The value proposition of each product/service should tie in with the overall brand.

When naming new products, services, and capabilities, consider the existing brand names and how the overall offering can correlate.

Completely own your brands

It's critical that the brand names be trademarkable and the matching domains are available. Ultimately, you want people asking and searching for your offering by their brand names—brands that no one else can provide.

Brand compounding

Your products/services may already be branded, but there may be more to the brand story. Look for ways to brand unique features, benefits, processes, guarantees, etc. Less tangible things like methods or capabilities will be perceived as more unique when an exclusive name is applied to them.

Okay, prove it!

Look for opportunities to prove the claim or promise made in your brand message. Case studies and customer testimonials provide proof that your company, product, and/or service actually lives up to what it says is unique about it. This will give your potential customers an idea of the experience they can expect when considering your organization and purchasing your product/service.

Branding after the sale

Opportunities for branding continue as the product is being delivered or while a service is being rendered and even long after a sale has been made. Your customers should be reminded as much as possible where a product came from or who is providing a service. Packaging, shipping receipts, installation and instruction guides, warranty papers, product labeling, etc., should coordinate and clearly identify your product and company brands. Service providers' clothing, handouts, documents, vehicles, etc., must be marked with a cohesive branding system. Ongoing forms of communications—newsletters, emails, courtesy calls, direct mail—will help reinforce your brand.

Don't do it this way

Here is a case for making sure your brand is implemented throughout a customer's experience. I ordered a lighting product from a company with which I was very familiar. When a customer service rep called to say the product was ready for pickup, she was very pleasant and professional, but instead of using the product brand name she referred to the product generically. When I took delivery of the product I noticed there was no company or product identification printed on the carton or on any of the documents enclosed.

One of the unique things about this lighting is how easy it is to install and adjust. Despite this attribute, the electrical contractors installed the product improperly. So, either the installers didn't follow the installation instructions or the instructions were not clearly written and illustrated (I lean toward the latter). In addition, the installation instructions had no product or company name or logo.

The actual light fixtures had small, low-quality labels applied to the side that were not visible once the product was installed. The installers had no idea of the brand or the source of this product. There was no apparent way to contact the company for installation help or to order this product for other customers.

This product will typically be specified and received by electrical contractors and installed in commercial and industrial settings. It is very likely that



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maintenance will come in contact with this product during its years of use and need supplier information.

This is a good example of why a thoroughly implemented brand identity will do its job well beyond the sale.

Introduce and ingrain

Your brand should be formally introduced to every tier of your market. This includes your own team members, sales channels, customers past and present, and prospects, as well as industry associations and media.

On an ongoing basis and in a strategic manner, the brand message should be conveyed using a variety of mediums and methods. The idea is to build mind share so that when there is a need for your products or services, yours is the first to be thought of, recommended, and/or specified.

A well-executed branding effort targeting your industry peers and trade media will create the perception that your company is the authority and a reputable source of knowledge. This will effectively reinforce your brand image with this audience.

Schedule your annual checkup

It's amazing how quickly a brand identity can get diluted or disjointed. With this in mind, it's a very good idea to collect a variety of pieces to check the health of your brand. Gather everything from literature, photos of signage and exhibits, laptop presentations, telephone scripts, labels, ads, emails, web pages, etc., to compare the visual and verbal continuity of your brand. Do this on a periodic basis.

Align or rejuvenate your brand

Borns can bring your company and product/service branding in line to work as a system. Or we can **reDiscover**SM your entire brand. Contact Randy Borns at randy@borns.com or 616.502.2213 to discuss the objectives for your overall brand strategy.



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