

DEVELOPING A POWERFUL BRAND

Determining how to best represent a brand cannot occur in a vacuum. While this is not an area in which there is a great deal of documented knowledge, it is clear that some foundational issues must be addressed for effective brand representation.

When embarking on the development of any new brand identity, there are a few items that must be addressed and rules that should be adhered to.

It must remain top of mind that the brand is the promise — the big idea — guiding the expectations that reside in the minds of each customer about a product, service, or organization. Brand helps customers cut through the proliferation of product and service choices available to them.

When a company begins a branding exercise, it's important that they truly understand who they are and where they need to be. This allows them to see the extent of the journey they will take to reach business objectives.

It is not always easy to achieve the desired positive brand recognition. It takes time, resources, and budget to ensure adequate market research, organizational understanding, internal brand training, support materials, and space design. The brand must be aligned externally and internally. Many organizations underestimate the importance of internal branding, and find that their brand strategies fall short of the impact they'd hoped for.^{1,2,3}

For example, there must be a direct link between organizational culture and the brand, as a brand is manifested in the artifacts present in an organization. The building itself is the largest artifact, followed by the interior space, imagery and signage, collateral, and so on. While many organizations' messaging, collateral, and marketing efforts may be on target, they fail to notice that when a customer contacts them, their offices or the person answering the phone may not support the brand. Such a disconnect can be confusing.

New York City Showroom 2007



Holland Headquarters Showroom 2008



Toronto Showroom 2008



Los Angeles Showroom 2005

Brand Identity Design Factors

The following design factors should be considered in the development of any strong brand.⁴

Vision: A compelling vision by an effective, articulate, and passionate leader is the foundation and inspiration for the best brands.

Meaning: The best brands stand for something — a big idea, a strategic position, a defined set of values, a voice that stands apart.

Authenticity: This is not possible without shared understanding and clarity throughout the organization about the market, positioning, value proposition, and competitive difference.

Differentiation: Brands always compete with each other within a business category and, at some level, with all brands that vie for consumer attention, loyalty, and dollars.

Sustainability: A brand must achieve longevity in an environment that is in constant flux. A brand needs to have enough room to evolve while remaining true to its foundation. On a global scale, a brand must be able to adapt to local flavor.

Coherence: Wherever and whenever a customer experiences a brand, it must feel familiar and have the desired effect and impact. Consistency does not need to be rigid or limiting to feel like one company, but foundational elements need to be in place to support the brand no matter where and how it is used.

Flexibility: An effective brand identity positions an organization for change and growth. It supports an evolving market strategy.

Commitment: Organizations need to actively manage all assets, including the brand name, the trademarks, the integrated sales and marketing systems, and the standards.

Value: This comes with time and effort — building awareness, increasing recognition, communicating uniqueness and quality, and expressing competitive differences will create a measurable effect.

When a brand identity is designed properly it will:

- Make it easy to build brand equity.
- Make it easier for the sales force to sell.
- Make it easier for customers to buy.
- It will also feel genuine and align with the organizational culture and values.

Reference

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2. Godin, Seth (2008) *Tribes: We Need You To Lead Us*. New York: Penguin Group.
3. Hanlon, Patrick (2006) *Primal Branding: Create Zealots for Your Brand, Your Company, and Your Future*. New York: Free Press.
4. Wheeler, Alina (2006) *Designing Brand Identity: A Complete Guide to Creating, Building, and Maintaining Strong Brands*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



Chicago Showroom 2010

Prague Showroom 2006



Washington DC Showroom 2006