



Whole Concept Branding Competing in the marketing whitewater.

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May we spend a moment with you and talk about product superiority? We are worried that organizations spend a lot of time thinking “We are the best!” or “Our cause is superior” when the reality is that most people simply do not have the time to check out the validity of these claims and are therefore, left to their own devices in thinking about your product or cause.

How do they do this?

They often view you in terms of emotional equity, that is to say, how your organization makes them feel. Organizations at this event live within a value field—a brand relationship environment containing many stakeholder groups. Get this: your brand is not part of your business; it is your business. Branding is not a marketing

scheme and your goal as director is to be savvy enough to constantly reengineer the intangible side of your cause to enhance its brand value and equity.

Secular marketing professionals have appreciated the power of brands for generations. Ministry marketing managers are only now beginning to understand the nature of brands and their importance to successfully competing in the burgeoning ministry marketplace. Our hope, however, is that brands will gain the attention of ministry executives, even board members, simply because of the importance of brands to the stakeholders they seek to attract.

These new “brand audiences” must develop an appreciation for the value of their organizations as brands. They must understand that brands are both business assets and business tools. Increasingly, they should want to shape their ministries and organizations as “branding organizations.”

As companies are changing the way they approach brand management, so must ministry organizations—if they want to attract and keep donors. Traditionally, the focus has been on image and communications. Brand management has always been delegated, at least to some extent, to advertising agencies and design firms. This model continues to work for some organizations, but brand leaders are looking for more. They appreciate that

customers and consumers receive brand impressions from a variety of sources both inside and outside the organization. When these sources are in alignment with communications, powerful and cost-efficient brand-building occurs. When alignment breaks down, the result is stakeholder confusion and wasted resources.

Such inefficiencies cannot be tolerated in today’s hyper-competitive environment. A new more holistic model of brand management has emerged.

Why Brand At All?

Let’s be clear first that a brand in-and-of-itself is not an asset; what

is an asset is “brand loyalty.” This is the DNA of marketing. “Brand equity” is the financial value of brand loyalty. Creating, keeping, and rewarding customer loyalty is the means to true “brand profitability.” You obviously want to keep your stakeholders with you as long as possible

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simply because it costs typically five times as much to find new ones as it does to keep existing ones.

In many cases, as a development officer you ought to be directing upwards of 70% of your development dollars to keeping and nurturing existing customers and moving them up the ladder of loyalty.

The Way Your Stakeholders See You May Not Agree With How You See Yourself.

Ministries as a whole are guilty of hearing what they want to hear and ignoring what has been said. Dialogue with your stakeholders is as important to brand building as whales to water. You can never stop trying to find out where your brand resides in the mind of the stakeholder and how its perception can be improved.

Unfortunately, most organizations don't spend real time with their stakeholders, nor truly respect their opinions. We don't know what they care deeply about. We don't show genuine sympathy towards them. In many cases, this will lead to an "unarticulated need," one that has not been expressed yet by consumers

Before dialogue with stakeholders, you really have to know who your organization is. It is easy to put some

executives in a room and get consensus. We think the starting point is not finding out what people like about your brand but finding out what they don't like. Communicating with stakeholder groups is simply not optional. Stakeholder research is more critical to your success than it has ever been. But be careful if you are limiting your research to focus groups! We're not against them, but beware of relying too heavily on this type of research alone. Participants often tell you what they think or do, but not why. They can give you rationalizations about a particular product or service, but these can lead you astray.

The Game Is Relationships And Not Transactions.

Yes, we are harping on this but here it goes again: The goal is not to raise money or sell space or products. The making of money is a necessity of your organization to survive, but it should not be the critical performance measure. Your goal is to create and keep and satisfy a stakeholder. Your goal is to get your stakeholder to give again, to come to an event again, to volunteer again, etc. We have lost that in our business philosophy.

You must think relationships and not transactions. Transactions are measured in cost per thousand. Relationships are measured in cost per one.

Too many nonprofits say that “our people are our greatest asset” but their behaviors indicate otherwise. Far too many managers think labor is cost, like paper clips. Sadly, the same attitude surfaces when considering the status of donors or volunteers. “Gifts processing” is reduced to nothing more than a financial transaction that leads to an interaction with the computer system’s software. More emphasis is placed on the interface with the computer than with the individual who made the gift!

A Tangible Difference. . . Or A Vague Promise?

It is simply easier for stakeholders to see a tangible difference than to hear a vague promise. This becomes critical for mainstream nonprofit organizations where it becomes harder to maintain product differences. They tend to “rest” and not relentlessly pursue differences. Obviously we’re referring here either to innovations in the cause, or the way you are relating to individual stakeholders, or customer service “fixes” you are putting in, or technological improvements.

Our bias in all of this is that sustained innovation will come from the softer side of what we do with individuals. Superior stakeholder service, useful information, and a commitment to shared values.

Stealing Your Heart Away.

Don’t laugh. We want stakeholders crying to the Lord for more money, time, friends, skills, and the wherewithal to help your organization. You will only get there if you steal their heart away. You must create what the Harvard Business Review calls “market space” and by this they mean that being a part of your organization gives the stakeholder an experience they can’t get anywhere else. Think about Barnes and Noble, Swatch watches, Lexus, Starbucks, Loblaws, Harley Davidson.

Today’s marketing environment demands that

we create and manage the essence of our stakeholders’ experience – those interactions with and feelings that define their sense of what a “relationship” is with our organizations. We don’t like experiential restaurants where there are guys singing and wait staff dancing, etc. We like moody light and being able to concentrate on what we are eating. Many

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people who buy smaller motorcycles don't do so because they can't afford a Harley; they do so because the smaller motorcycles are lighter or quieter.

The definition of your brand, therefore, needs to be much larger than simply the benefits and features. It is the entire "takeaway" and how it fits into a person's frame of reference. You must do right by the customer or donor in order to create not simply "satisfaction" but rather "delight." This implies more than whether your logo design is contemporary, or what colors you choose for your stationery. Whole concept branding recognizes that there is a linkage that develops between all aspects of your organization and the mind – and heart – of the donor. Your mission statement can, therefore, become the glue that cements your brand into people's minds. Rather than looking merely at donors' concerns about the financial performance of your organization, start with the causal performance of your mission. Think outward and not inward.

Get people talking about your mission and help them to understand it. Review it with individuals all the time. This will foster collaboration – certainly a desirable trait among organizational stakeholders. But don't preach "collaboration" if you don't believe it, or refuse to act on it. Everyone who deals with your brand can either be

"missionaries" or "terrorists," capable of being evangelists for your brand or working to destroy it.

Brand Missionaries Create Brand Power.

The new battleground is around the power of brands. You must fix your employees first if you expect them to become missionaries for you. They can clearly become assets. You must decide to be collaborative and force a love for collaboration into the organization. Don't hire people who refuse this mandate. Stakeholder relationships must hold tremendous authority in the organization, and strong stakeholders expect – rather, they demand – a say in how your organization is run.

As a result, those who become your missionaries also become your insiders, and as insiders, often want customization (you design something to suit a stakeholder's needs) and personalization (the stakeholder becomes the co-creator of the product). The best book on this, by the way, is Peppers' and Rogers' *One To One Enterprise*.

What about the Internet? An inferior brand has a harder time hiding on the Internet where brands become more and more transparent. Technology has impacted brand communication but it is highly stratified amongst different demographic groups and as such, are often more highly accountable. The Net

though, allows us lots of room to develop mass vehicles of customization for various groups.

Conclusion

Remember that brand leaders are looking for more. They are aligning their strategies, their structures and their systems in order to ensure that customers and consumers receive brand impressions from a variety of sources both inside and outside the organization. Powerful and cost-efficient brand-building occurs when organizations base their success upon the premise that they must relentlessly pursue the objective of customer/donor delight. Mere

satisfaction is no longer good enough.

Today's super-competitive environment demands a new, more holistic model of brand management that understands this fact: Brand-building contributions are mandatory from every area that is significant to brand audiences. It focuses on the assets, service delivery and image of the organization, as well as the assumptions, behaviors, desires and emotions of the donor. Branding is now everybody's business. Understanding this fact, and then acting upon it, is what we mean by "whole concept" branding. Your organization's success in today's marketplace depends upon it.

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