

Branding

I recently met with a group of business professionals engaged in a general discussion about branding; more particularly, discussing the merits surrounding re-branding. Early in the discussion, a direct and very poignant question was posed, "What is it?" My answer was equally direct and to the point, "Branding is a strategy." In an effort to provide a clearer understanding of what branding is really about, I asked the following question, "If you were given 15-seconds free airtime on Super Bowl Sunday to state what your business is about, what would you say?"

Although there are individuals who contend branding is all about logos, signs, websites and marketing collateral, it's shortsighted to believe that's the extent of it. These items play a significant and important role in branding; however, they represent the tip of the branding iceberg. What lies beneath are things such as positioning, culture, people, service and products. The sum total of all these things serves in determining the essence of your brand.

"If this business were split up, I would give you the land and bricks and mortar, and I would take the brands and trademarks, and would fare better than you."

- John Stuart, Chairman of Quaker (1900).

An annual study published by Business Week ranked 100 of the most valuable brands. The study ranked brands on the basis of future earnings potential and concluded, on average, brands account for more than one-third share value (intangible assets). Coca Cola's brand, for example, equated to 51% of shareholder value (60 billion+).

Branding it is what differentiates you in your market. It provides an outward view of how you are positioned and perceived, and it influences emotions and attitudes about your organization. Brand value is rooted in a promise and expectation of quality and consistency, and provides a clear expression of what distinguishes you from your competitors. The objective of branding is to invoke a perception in the mind and an emotion in the heart. Effective branding takes a commodity and infuses value and status, which in turn creates a preference and commands a premium. It serves in building recognition and longevity, and facilitates vision and focus—inside and out. In short, it is a tangible banner and rallying point.

"As with cattle, branding provides differentiation in the midst of a vast and overcrowded range. Everything you do—every ad, every product, and every expression must connect consistently with your brand position and values."

- Bill Chiaravalle, Principal & Creative Director, Brand Navigation, LLC.

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