

branding essentials



Ideas that engage, inform and inspire.

branding is no longer just a marketing or advertising industry term; it's part of popular culture.

Anything can have a brand nowadays—celebrities, television shows, sports teams and even political leaders. However, effective branding is more than just a recognizable face or logo; it requires discipline and insight. No matter what is being branded, it's important to remember some foundational principles.

one voice

Behind every successful brand is a clear and consistent promise. And every point of contact is an opportunity to communicate that promise.

Think about “Just do it.” It’s more than a logo and a tagline. It’s a look and feel, a brand voice and an attitude all working together to articulate a unique positioning. It’s your employees, your packaging, your advertising and then some.

With so many variables in the brand equation, staying on-brand is a full-time job. You must ensure that every line of copy and every design element fulfill the expectations you have set and sing in perfect harmony.

You must vigorously protect that precious place in the perceptual landscape occupied by your product or service. If you do, you will be rewarded with one of the most powerful competitive advantages available to businesses today—brand recognition.



embracing synergy

Until a few years ago, integrated branding was essentially the act of assuring that “all brand contacts received by a customer or prospect for a product, service, or organization are relevant to that person and consistent over time.”*

To most marketers, that meant a consistent look and messaging across all of their marketing communications. Today, the most well integrated brand campaigns are all of that and more. They take your brand promise beyond print, radio, TV and other usual suspects of paid advertising. They blur the lines between advertising and PR. The most successful campaigns take on a life of their own—they can appear anywhere, from blogs to daily conversations to the nightly news. The passivity of paid advertising gets you nowhere. Today’s marketplaces want to interact with their favorite brands and are more willing than ever to welcome these brands into every facet of their lives. Yet it’s harder than ever to find the door with a brand promise that is relevant, credible and engaging. Not to mention, far-reaching enough to live in many media.

However, assuming you come up with a campaign that is so compelling that it borders on cultural phenomenon, we must be equally creative in finding unexpected yet appropriate places to bring these concepts to life. Ambient media, social networks, online, events—everything is fair game. And every one of these interactions, from an email to a viral video built around your brand, must create a unified front in fulfilling the brand promise you have made.



getting the brand promise right

Marketers have a tendency to confuse the brand message with the product or service message. They are trained to promote features and benefits rather than the emotive qualities associated with the human interactions and preferences of their brand.

Confusing these two is fairly common. It is a natural and rational approach to promote features and benefits because they are easier to compare and differentiate from the competition. Features and benefits are important and may even be interesting, but they rarely go beyond the surface to make the emotional connection necessary to create preference for the brand. One doesn't have to invest in audience persona research to create messaging around a feature or benefit—it is readily available and easily communicated. But if the goal is to have your target audience covet your brand, you must look deeply into the motivations that drive their life choices.

Occasionally, someone stumbles on a belief, which then transforms an idea. A few years ago a creative team had the assignment to brand and market the Maybelline line of lipstick. The product line had many features and benefits that differentiated it from the competition: colors were deeper, there were more choices, the lipstick stayed on longer and it was easier to apply. So the creative team focused on these features, thinking that is what women want and need. Did this approach cause a preference? No. It wasn't until someone realized that they really weren't selling lipstick—they were selling hope, and that sparked a different approach—one that was based on an emotional preference.



moving forward

Regardless of where branding may go in the future, these ground rules will continue to hold true. A brand that speaks with a single voice, invites interaction, flows seamlessly into daily life and touches an emotional chord, is ready for success.

At TDC, our goal is always to uncover the emotional preference in a brand. It is often a game changer. The process to find the right answer is not easy or simple, but it is worth the effort. For those who want to think beyond promoting features and benefits, call us, we will change everything.

Branding and Integrated Marketing Communications

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