



Breaking out of the branding mold

By Jarold Muino

Selling a product or service has become more difficult than ever due to the saturation in the market for competing similar products and new disruptive products. Consumers are subjected every day to hundreds of brands that do not differ much one from another.

According to Dharma Singh Khalsa, M.D., in his book *Brain Longevity*, the average person sees 16,000 advertisements, logos, and labels in a day.¹ Only a few companies are enjoying the privilege of being at the top of mind as the most popular and visible companies in their categories. All the other companies tend to imitate each other and their advertising messages repeat over and over the same advantages and benefits without standing out or having better positioning in the market.

What does a company do to move its product or service to top of mind by consumers and customers over all the other myriad product options? In which way should we communicate with consumers in an accurate and efficient manner? How will we position ourselves in the market?

First of all you must understand and know your product, and what it can offer differently than other products of the same type. In which way do we want consumers to recognize our product. What benefits does our product bring in consumer needs and which values would it bring to their lives — ultimately what makes it unique and unrepeatable. As Howard Schultz of Starbucks says, “Customers must recognize that you stand for something.”

In the same way that your product should be different, it also has to be understood and perceived as part of the suite of products that have the same social roll. Consumers do not expect to interact in the same way with a Tour Operator than with a Financial Institution or vice versa.

Render unto God what is God's, and unto Caesar what is Caesar's – The Bible.

The market niche needs to be wisely chosen, specifically as to whom the product is targeted. Your product is not designed to meet the needs of all types of consumers but it should be targeted to a small sector of the consumer population. This niche must have a close relationship with your differentiating values and with your Brand values. The more precise you are in knowing what your niche is, the easier it is to identify the most potent opportunities to market your product.

So if I'm looking for something online, I think of Google. If I want a quick sandwich made with care, I think of Subway. If I want

to furnish a house without spending a fortune, then there's IKEA — David Airey

Your communication should be repeating over and over again your brand values. Companies that base their communication on fads or ephemeral trends, waste precious resources of marketing budgets and lose forever their market timeliness and opportunity. It's like fad-based pop bands that have one hit and are really popular for a while, and then they disappear without a trace. Companies that know themselves, and are able to effectively express their special qualities, in a relevant way, are establishing a strong connection with their customers needs and experiences. We are still listening to the “Rolling Stones” music 50 years later, even younger generations who were not even born when the Stones hits and records first hit the music scene.

Any damn fool can put on a deal, but it takes genius, faith and perseverance to create a brand — David Ogilvy

The quality of your product, how it is presented, the customer service experience, how confident you are that you have a special product or service, how you answer the phone, which colour identifies your company, how your brand identity looks and what themes it evokes, the way your product or service is perceived by the consumers – all of this becomes the essence of your Brand.

Products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind — Walter Landor.

Brands that courageously invest in distinguishing their brand presence, reap the rewards. For example, according to Landor's Breakaway Brands, their list shows the top ten brands (listed at the end of this paragraph) who have most dramatically increased their brand strength over a three-year period (2008-2011) — most of the names are very familiar, have growing brand strength, awareness and loyal brand connections resulting from distinctive and deliberate brand efforts. 1) Facebook 206%, 2) Keurig 79%, 3) Skype 77%, 4) Amazon.com 76%, 5) Vizio 66%, 6) Samsung 63%, 7) YouTube 63%, 8) Netflix 44%, 9) USMC 43%, 10) Apple 42%.

The way in which you can positively influence the shaping of your brand and its proper implementation will position your company or organization in the right place in the market. A well-thought-out brand draws the customer in, long before a purchase is made, transforming your product or service into the right choice for your consumers that they in return will “choose” with confidence.

Craft a brand communication that precisely represents your organization's unique strengths and attributes which facilitates excited and enthusiastic customers. In a marketplace awash in the “me-too” approach to branding, it is time to break the mold, and discover who you are and who you want to be.

1. *Logo Design Love: A Guide to Creating Iconic Brand Identities* — David Airey