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**Brand Love (Part II)**

**By John Jordan**

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Last issue, I talked about increasing your Brand Love— meaning to increase the affection that prospects and customers feel toward your business.

Why?

Because increasing "affection" will build relationships. Those relationships, if made strong enough by increased Brand Love, build a bridge for prospects to become customers. To some, that bridge might be made of rope, swaying in the breeze, complete with wooden planks. To others, it will be a mighty stone structure. It all depends on how well you connect with each prospect.

It also means putting more cement on the bond with the customers you already have. Locking customers in, tighter and tighter with every brand experience is a critical aspect to profitability and growth. The reason here is twofold: It costs less to maintain current customers than to gain new ones, and the best advertising is word of mouth. Sounds like a cliché ('cause they are), but... it's true, folks.

So, the big question is: How to do it and do it better than your competition.

Previously, I mentioned getting honest and forthright feedback from customers. Having one-on-one conversations can help. You will also get valued honesty from questionnaire cards that have a few quick answers AND some space to write in other thoughts. Actually, that could be the most important aspect of the card. Getting this kind of feedback can provide huge rewards.

First, this type of "silent" feedback lets the writer give a more honest opinion, rather than talking face-to-face. They don't have to sign their name. Also, the feedback given can open up trains of thought that may not have occurred to you before. You may get insight into improving your core business. The insight may turn into a realization that leads to big discovery, such as a different product, service, or an entire market.

## Brand Love (Part II)

Another way to increase Brand Love is the proper training of your employees. Nothing is more of a downer (except perhaps bad merchandise) to a customer than an incompetent employee. Service should be a big part of your marketing plan, and that means involving time and expense to train your employees properly. We've all heard our economy is becoming more service-based, but we've all suffered from bad service—more often than not. Being on hold five minutes or more. Being ignored when you walk in the door. Given incorrect information, being overcharged, or having something delivered late. All bad news for customers.

I once called a local outlet of a national home center chain, and I was on hold for 30 minutes! I stayed on as long as I could, just to see actually how many minutes it took for someone to answer. It was so long, I could hum their jingle in my sleep! And they never answered. Now, I go strictly to their competition. Alarming, it's to the point where mediocre service is so noticeably different, it gets applauded. Keeping your employees trained and caring starts at the top. So if this hasn't been a

priority for you, make it one, and you'll see your referrals go up.

This leads into my next point – becoming the Preferred Employer. In the marketing triangle, there are three elements: Business, Customers, and Employees. With the Business at the apex of the triangle, it cannot exist without the other two. You're not just marketing to customers. You are marketing to your employees too, because they are investing their time to work for you.

When you create an excellent work atmosphere and employees find working for you rewarding, you get great performance from them AND you attract top talent. Those are two things that are priceless and almost insure success. Conversely, when you don't care about your employees, their training, or make work an unpleasant experience, count on poor to mediocre help without much care or effort. I cannot think of a faster way to drive good help and customers away.

Being the Preferred Employer doesn't mean doesn't mean there are no rules in place or you pay obscenely high wages for comparable work. It simply means your employees are respected, taught to do their job well, given proper feedback when needed, and are made to feel valued.

Take a good objective look around your business. Get honest feedback from your customers AND your employees. Great businesses become that way because they are constantly searching for ways to become better. Those two groups should be your most important and most depended-on allies in that never-ending search. ~

### **Creating An Unconscious Brand**

**By Rachelle Disbennett-Lee, MCC, MS**

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Creating An Unconscious Brand

## Brand Love (Part II)

Branding is a big topic in today's business world. Everywhere we look we can see examples of branding. Just think of companies like McDonald's, Coca Cola, and Toyota. These companies work hard to create and maintain their brand images. Branding is actually somewhat of a recent phenomena in business. It was started back with Proctor and Gamble when they decided to name one of their soaps Ivory. Naming the soap proved to be an excellent idea to the detriment of their other soap products. People stopped buying the generic soaps and began buying Ivory. Because of the success of Ivory, P&G realized the importance of branding and began a branding revolution. Moreover, branding is not just for companies; individuals have their own brands too.

You may not think of yourself as a brand, but you are. Most of us do not work at creating a specific brand like the big name products that we have all come to know and love. But, it doesn't matter. We are creating a brand everyday, consciously or unconsciously. Unfortunately, most of us are creating our brands unconsciously.

Everything we do, say, wear, every expression and even things we don't say and do create a brand. We cannot not communicate our brand because it is part of who we are. We might have a brand as a trustworthy person, or a good friend, or perhaps something not as positive such as someone who is always late. Our brand is communicated everyday by every action we take.

Stop creating an unconscious brand. Your brand is important because it says who you are and what you stand for. It communicates a great deal of information about you and can help or hurt you. Instead of being oblivious to the brand you are creating, begin taking charge of your brand. Your brand lets others know what you stand for, what they can expect from you and what kind of person you are. Make sure it communicates accurately.

Coach Lee is a Certified Master Coach specializing in working with business owners and professionals in being more profitable and productive while staying sane and balanced. Coach Lee is the publisher of the award winning e-zine, 365 Days of Coaching, because life happens every day. Visit Coach Lee at her websites [coachlee.com](http://coachlee.com) and [365daysofcoaching.com](http://365daysofcoaching.com). True Direction, Inc. Copyright 2003



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