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Made in ... More Than a Manufacturing Statement

By Martin Lindstrom

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Imagine that I told you of a product, but that it was one about which I knew nearly nothing: I didn't know what its price was, what any of its unique features were or even what type of product it was. But imagine I did know the product's country of origin.

Let's, just for fun, say the product was from Switzerland. Now, what would your impression of this product be? I bet, even now, as part of this hypothetical situation I'm posing, be able to tell me something the mystery product's likely price level, its probable quality and the reputation it most likely enjoyed. Such assumptions would be inspired by the preconceptions you, as a consumer, hold about the country in question. Country branding means much more than adhering a "Made in XXX" label to a product. Origin constitutes an important piece of branding which, in many cases, can be so influential that it overtakes the brand's other reputation builders.

If I were to tell you that the next supercar were to come from Germany, you probably wouldn't be surprised. You would probably be immediately curious about it, expecting the fictional vehicle to be of high engineering and design quality, expensive and solid. Now imagine I did surprise you by revealing that the forthcoming supercar was actually to be a product of Greece. Your impressions of the likely product would be totally changed, your assumptions inspired by the apparent personality the country of origin communicates to your perceptions.

Have you ever wondered why every perfume bottle is accompanied by packaging that bears the banner "Paris, Milan, New York, Rome, London"? I'm sure you don't really expect the perfume to be produced all those places. Now imagine the perfume's catalogue of cities read something like "Prague, Helsinki, Melbourne, Seattle, Oslo, Auckland". I guarantee your first impressions of both versions of the same article would be coloured by the suppositions you made about their two proclamations of notional affiliation. Quite ironic when none of us believe for a minute that any of the cited locales have anything to do with the product's manufacture.

I can't stop thinking about how valuable some countries are for their manufacturers. A high-tech brand coming from Japan makes sense for most of us. I'm convinced the promotional task for a high-tech

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brand in, say, the USA, would be a substantially easier one if the product hailed from Japan than it would be if its label read "Made in Iceland". Why? Because the country establishes the brand's initial reputation.

Conversely, brands themselves can create countries' reputations. Let's consider Finland. If I asked you to respond to the notion of Finland ten years ago you'd probably have said things like "cold", "midnight sun", and so on. Today you're likely to think of high-tech mobile phone technology when you think of Finland. And this huge mind shift is purely thanks to Nokia (which, by the way, was a chainsaw manufacturer just twenty years ago).

So, you can claim that brands create countries' reputations and that countries create brands' reputations. This is a very interesting piece of theory to keep in mind for when you next find the

opportunity to create a new brand from scratch. The theory should not only make you consider what values your brand should stand for, but also where it should be manufactured and where it should be perceived as being manufactured. Having the wrong country label on your package won't destroy your brand, but I'm convinced that having the right "Made in" label will save you a substantial amount of marketing money.

So You Want To Get In To Manufacturing (part 1)

By Rick Boklage

Having been in the personal care manufacturing business for a number of years I have some advise for those of you thinking about starting a manufacturing operation.

First off some manufacturing basics.

Manufacturing is essentially the same no mater what product you are producing. It is governed by supply and demand. The term "manufacture it and they will buy" does not always hold true. Manufacturing a product that was popular 25 years ago will not necessarily sell in todays market. You can however manufacture a product that no one has seen before and with some creative marketing create demand for that product.

So what is required to manufacture a successful product? Start with the basics of any business, the business plan. This is essential to the success of any business be it a manufacturing or service based business. A business play will provide you with important information such as: What your costs are going to be Who are your suppliers How are you going to market your product What distribution channels will you use What customer support will you need to provide

A good business plan is my no means cast in stone. There is always room for adjustment as you refine your process, find new suppliers or change marketing channels.

Producing the product is the one step that requires the most attention. Not having the right staff,

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process, equipment or suppliers could bring your whole venture to an abrupt end. One of the biggest costs in the manufacturing business is the labor component. But having the right personnel who are dependable, experts at what they do and take pride in their work are also one of the biggest assets a manufacturing company. So take your time to choose your staff.

In part 2 I will discuss the manufacturing process, equipment and suppliers.

Rick Boklage has been involved in the personal care manufacturing business for a number of years. He recently started a new website

to provide a one-stop resource for

people wanting to start their own business.

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