

To Brand or Not to Brand – That is NOT the Question.

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By Donna Lehman

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Think you can't afford to pay attention to branding? That it's only for the rich and largest? Think again. No matter what size company you are - you really have no choice. Your brand exists in some shape or form and if you don't invest in managing your brand, it will manage you, perhaps to oblivion.

Before we get into convincing hard numbers and business cases, let's do something a little fun. I propose that brand is so pervasive that you can actually use it to identify where someone is from. Kind of like an accent or inflection of speech. It is, after all, our experiences with a brand that shape it.

Take this "From Where In the U.S.?" quiz:

Let's start with something near and dear to most of us: food.

What mayonnaise would you swear is the best and search for in the market?

- A. Hellman's
- B. Best Foods
- C. Miracle Whip
- D. None of the above

If you answered

A. You're likely from the east coast states and refuse to call it Best Foods, even if you move to California.

B. You are from one of the states west of the Rockies. You've never even heard of Hellman's, so why does they're label look the same? Because they are.

C. You're likely from the Midwest, Missouri in particular, and you make really sweet potato salad. (Sorry Grandma)

D. Can't tell where you're from. Maybe you hate mayonnaise.

As a kid, one of your favorite sweet snacks after school was:

- A. Hostess Ding–dongs
- B. Drake's Ring Dings

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- C. Moon Pies
- D. Scooter Pies
- E. None of the above

This tells me that:

- A. You're from St. Louis all the way west to California. If you know them instead as King Dons, then the east coast. If you recognize the name Big Wheels, you're from someplace else.
- B. You're from the east coast - NY/NJ - and think that DingDongs are rip-offs.
- C. You grew up in the south, especially Tennessee, and typically ate these with an "RC Cola" to wash it down. Talk about sugar overload... (http://www.moonpie.com/hist_text.asp)
- D. You're from the eastern seaboard, and wondered what in the heck a "Moon Pie" was.
- E. You're from Canada and ate something called "Wagon Wheels".

And for a non-food one that gets so specific you'll think I'm psychic...

You need to get new clothes for the whole family, something nice to wear to Grandma's birthday (where you will not mention the too-sweet potato salad), and you want reasonable selection, affordable prices. You head to the nearest:

- A. Famous-Barr
- B. Robinsons-May
- C. Filene's
- D. Kauffman's
- E. Foley's
- F. Hecht's
- G. Meier & Frank
- H. The Bay

And I will gaze into my crystal ball and pinpoint your location as:

- A. Specifically Midwest - WI, MO, IL, IN, KY
- B. The Wild West only - CA, NV, AZ, UT. Showdown, anyone?
- C. New England. And don't let any of your friends drag you into Filene's basement in Boston...you won't come out alive.
- D. The industrial belt – NY, PA, OH, WV
- E. The Texas, NM, OK, LA kinda' south
- F. Mid-Atlantic states where they have soft drawls and soft-shell crabs - MD, VA, NC, and parts of TN
- G. Northwest Territory- WA, OR
- H. Canada - where they eat Wagon Wheels

(Maps available at: <http://www2.mayco.com/common/index.jsp>)

How was that for brand identification? All of these brands started locally, without the war chests of advertising dollars that people think are needed today. They are memorable because of the experience we had with them - which was consistent and positive – so we told our neighbors. And we developed strong loyalties.

If I could turn MarketUP into the Moon Pie of the small business marketing world - well, let's just say

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my Tennessee Grandpa would be proud.

Sounds simple, but it's not that easy. Here are some of the compelling facts that result from religious brand building:

At a recent branding seminar which I attended, one of the speaker's provided some staggering numbers related to valuation of a few of the largest global brands.

Coca Cola at #1 tells the story:

Total Valuation – \$115 Billion (give or take)

Brand value – \$70.45 Billion (about 61%)

(source: Business Week, 4 Aug 2003)

Anecdotally, Ford is said to have 75% brand valuation. You can guess what the stats are for Microsoft, IBM, MacDonald's, Nike, Intel, etc.

"So what?" you might be thinking, "I'm not in that league. I can focus on selling and networking. No

need to spend time and money on that BRAND stuff."

Certainly the deep-pocket conglomerates have had plenty of time and money to build the kind of numbers that take your breath away. But it's not just the advertising spend that got them there. They had to start and continue with a vision, products people wanted, service that satisfied and made their customers talk about them, creating more customers. That's what brand is all about.

Brand Building on Any Budget:

1. Articulate your vision, and stick with it. No flip-flopping. No re-inventing every year. No re-naming to stay trendy. Take the time to clarify who you are and what you offer. The exercise alone will be worth it. Then build your communication tools.

2. Deliver your products and services in a consistent way that satisfies people. They WILL talk about you. And according to David Thompson, CMO of Webex ("We've got to start meeting like this."), the only true brand measurement is this: Your customers are willing, nay, ANXIOUS to refer you to others. Amen.

3. Make sure your brand is communicated by everyone in your organization and anyone associated with you. Bad to say, "We are a high-touch service provider" and have someone call your phone number only to go into an endless, impersonal phone script hell. Be honest about your value.

4. Yes, it will also help if you develop a "look and feel", those somewhat scary words that conjure up \$\$\$\$ and endless rounds of designers comps. It doesn't have to be like that. The dot.bomb era should have weaned anyone of that notion if nothing else. Money was flying around paying for the jazziest names, logos, taglines and websites. And it kept flying...far, far away. Famous? You want famous with out frill? Try "Hewlett-Packard". "HP". Two names. Two blue initials inside a curved frame. Starting in 1939 they didn't launch ad campaigns, they instead delivered consistent innovation. Tagline: Invent.

5. Measure. Be persistent. And real, and sometimes creative. But, be yourself.

I'm going online to order some authentic Chattanooga, TN Moon Pies to be delivered, which I will then have with a Starbucks, not an RC, that I will have purchased from a Starbucks location, because the brand experience is so much more rewarding there than at Albertson's. (Where there is a Starbucks kiosk, but it is an extremely disappointing extension of the brand.) Starbucks - are you listening?

Further reading along the same lines:

<http://www.marketingprofs.com/4/layton1.asp>

<http://www.marketingprofs.com/3/arruda7.asp>

Small Business Branding: The Personal Connection

Brand history and fun facts sites:

<http://www.foodreference.com/html/fhellmansmayonnaise.html>

http://www.roadfood.com/Forums/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=2879첥

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Creating An Unconscious Brand

By Rachelle Disbennett-Lee, MCC, MS

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Creating An Unconscious Brand

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

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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.

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