WBA

DEVELOPING A WHOLE BRAND PROMISE

If ever there was a task that requires Whole Brain Thinking, I believe identifying your core brand promise is probably it!!!

As we said earlier, unless you are operating in a tight and very specific niche, your audience will bring all four thinking quadrants to bear on an investigation of what you are offering.

To recap:

The Greens are going to be asking, ‘what exactly do you do?’

The Blues are going to be asking, ‘what makes you credible, what evidence suggests you can deliver’?

The Yellows are going to be asking, ‘what makes you special or different?’

The Reds are going to ask, ‘How will you make me feel?’

I don’t want to suggest you can be all things to all people. But, in an ideal world, a brand promise contains both left brain and right brain appeal.

For example.

Some years ago, we were working on the brand Canon, and we developed a Brand Promise of ‘Advanced Simplicity’. We wanted to expand their appeal beyond technical specifications.

(Insert Canon slide)

‘Advanced’ appealed to the technology minded Blues and also to the Yellows who were seeking differentiation and superiority, while ‘Simplicity’ appealed to the reassurance seeking Reds and process driven Greens.

Just two words, but very much a Whole Brain Appeal.

While working for the luxury yacht manufacturer Grand Banks we developed the Brand Promise of ‘Modern Romance’.

(Insert Grand Banks slide)

These beautiful boats had graced the American coastline since the 1960s. But, in recent years, they’d undergone a technical overhaul that made them faster, better built, more comfortable and more reliable. But they’d lost none of their charm and allure.

We developed the Brand Promise of ‘Modern Romance’.

This gave us a communication platform that allowed us to discuss all of the left-brain attributes – design, contemporary materials, build process, speed, fuel-burn and so on - while showcasing the right brain values of comfort and sociability, and the spirit of adventure and wonder that comes from exploring the seas.

I’ll give one last example from our work.

Recently, we were asked to help with the rebranding of one of Australia’s most prestigious Private Boys Schools.

(Insert Shore imagery without direct reference to the name Shore)

The school is steeped in Anglican tradition and operating in a highly competitive environment. Australian Media are not sympathetic to these institutions and there has been much bad press focused on other schools in the category.

We developed the Brand Promise of ‘Educating the Head, Heart and Soul’.

While other schools focused on achievement, career potential and so on, we used this brand promise to create a holistic communication platform that would appeal to a wide range of parental concerns – we were offering academic success in educating the Head, moral and social values in educating the Heart and spiritual values in educating the Soul. And this unique combination of three areas of focus was in itself differentiating.

So, is there a process for developing a Brand Promise?

Yes and No!

There are guidelines that work well within the concept of the Whole Brain Model. But, ultimately, this is where you and your team will have to make a judgement call.

So, it’s probably better to ask, how can we approach the challenge?

Think left and right. Think functional and emotional. Or top and bottom – facts and ideas as well as feelings and values.

Ask, how can you combine the emotional values of what you do with the functional attributes of your product and service. How will consumers benefit in terms of practical value while enjoying feelings of reassurance, or connection?

Or is there an over-riding focus? Should you be stressing a left or right-brain benefit and supporting it with evidence from an opposing quadrant. For niche products, this can be the case.

Some years ago, I was working on a very popular alcoholic drink called Bundi Rum. Its most overwhelming value lay not in the product which was normally diluted with Coca Cola. It’s true value lay in the relationships that developed from the ritual of sharing it.

It was an essentially masculine brand, and the Brand Promise we developed was ‘The Spirit of Mateship’.

(Insert Bundi slide)

We then characterised this mateship through the behaviour of a brand emblem – a polar bear that had traditionally featured on the bottle. He became the epitome of ‘mateship’ and a heroic figure to this target audience. One that drove the brand to extraordinary popularity and success.

But if you look at that Brand Promise closely, you can see it does two things. It tells you precisely what it is, an alcoholic spirit. Rational, left brain. But, using the ambiguity of the word spirit, it adds an emotional value that was extremely important to our strategy, an emotional attribute that bonded the audience to the brand and to each other by making Bundi a seminal moment in the development of their friendships.

So, the process - such as it is – requires studying and pondering the four quadrants of the brand, looking at the emotional and rational relationships you are trying to build and seeing if you can synthesise a simple statement that embraces and connects some of the ideas and values you have identified in a Whole Brain analysis.

As you might expect, it’s both an analytical and creative process.

And, if you get stuck, you might find that ai is helpful in generating some thought starters.

My suggestion would be that you take an attribute from the left, an attribute from the right and ask Chat GPT a question in this format:

“My brand has two defining attributes. On the one hand it displays/offers -------- (add attribute) but on the other hand it displays/offers ----------(add attribute). What core brand promise could connect them both?”

Or try an attribute from the top and one from the bottom.

Don’t expect a neat, succinct, presentation ready result from the ai algorithm. But you might be surprised by how this process will force you to stay on track and look for a whole-brained expression of what makes you both unique and desirable.

Once you have that promise, you’re ready to complete the Brand-on-a-page and will have a blueprint that will guide you in all brand communication – internally as well as externally.

It’ll also play a pivotal role in the ongoing development of your products and services.

So let’s go the next module, take a look at the example of biG, review its brand promise and see how it completes the whole brain picture of the brand.

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