

The Soul of the Company



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Senior Vice President

"If you think about the inherent value of a great business, brand is enormous—often more valuable than the company's tangible fixed assets. In the minds of consumers, the brand *is* the company. So everything we do to define and position our brand, to make it more powerful and compelling, yields immense value for our employees, our dealers and suppliers, and most importantly for our shareholders and other stakeholders. That in turn manifests itself in higher sales, better margins and lower marketing costs, elevated levels of customer trust, better word-of-mouth communication, and better advocacy in the marketplace.

After the Alliance was created, the new management team came in and made several critical decisions. One was a call to clearly define Nissan as a global brand. The message was clear. Nissan was not going to be a supplier of commodity automotive appliances. We are building cars that capture people's imaginations. Cars that are fun to drive, that people want to drive. Cars that might not be for everyone—that could even prove polarizing in their design and performance characteristics—but cars impossible to ignore, cars that quicken the pulse.

Well, our team got the product right, and it's up to us to get the branding right.

Another decision was that we are one company, with one brand worldwide. That doesn't mean pursuing a cookie-cutter approach, with the same cars or communications everywhere; instead, it is a declaration that our core values will be more carefully defined and articulated in every



Nissan at the 2005 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS)

market where we compete. We have set up very specific targets for the brand. My personal mission statement is to build Nissan and Infiniti into the most clearly defined, powerful brands in the automotive industry. We created a brand scorecard to measure our performance, covering aspects like retail sales, market share, profitability, total distribution costs, as well as purchase intentions and opinions about the brand in several categories. In virtually every market around the world, all of these metrics are moving in a very positive direction. We're happy about that, but certainly not satisfied.

Historically, brand management has been about enforcing brand standards, guarding your visual identity and brand identity, making sure that intellectual property is managed intelligently and advantageously. We're working on changing that focus, being more strategic and more opportunistic when thinking about growing our business rather than simply protecting existing assets.

Some people mistake advertising or public relations, or the way you greet customers in the showroom as the brand. In reality, everything we do as a company affects the brand. Every customer interaction with our brand helps define who we are and what we stand for, not only for that individual customer but also for everyone that customer interacts with.

Simply stated, the core strength of the brand is the core strength of the company. Assets are perishable; financial strength is ephemeral. The values the brand can define, and the behaviors the brand can drive, give the organization clarity in the marketplace. Brand also gives people here at Nissan focus. Our brands are, in fact, the soul of the company."



Infiniti presentation at the 2004 NAIAS