

## Nike Brand Mantra

A brand with a keen sense of what it represents to consumers is Nike. Nike has a rich set of associations with consumers, revolving around such considerations as its innovative product designs, its sponsorships of top athletes, its award-winning advertising, its competitive drive, and its irreverent attitude. Internally, Nike marketers adopted a three-word brand mantra of “authentic athletic performance” to guide their marketing efforts. Thus, in Nike’s eyes, its entire marketing program—its products and how they are sold—must reflect the key brand values conveyed by the brand mantra.

Nike’s brand mantra has had profound implications for its marketing. In the words of ex-Nike marketing gurus Scott Bedbury and Jerome Conlon, the brand mantra provided the “intellectual guard rails” to keep the brand moving in the right direction and to make sure it did not get off track somehow. Nike’s brand mantra has even affected product development. Over the years, Nike has expanded its brand meaning from “running shoes” to “athletic shoes” to “athletic shoes and apparel” to “all things associated with athletics (including equipment).”

Each step of the way, however, it has been guided by its “authentic athletic performance” brand mantra. For example, as Nike rolled out its successful apparel line, one important hurdle for the products was that they should be innovative enough through material, cut, or design to truly benefit top athletes. The revolutionary moisture-wicking technology of their DriFit apparel line left athletes drier and more comfortable as they sweat. At the same time, the company has been careful to avoid using the Nike name to brand products that did not fit with the brand mantra, like casual “brown” shoes.

When Nike has experienced problems with its marketing program, they have often been a result of its failure to figure out how to translate its brand mantra to the marketing challenge at hand. For example, in going to Europe, Nike experienced several false starts until realizing that “authentic athletic performance” has a different meaning over there and, in particular, has to involve soccer in a major way. Similarly, Nike stumbled in developing its All Conditions Gear (ACG) outdoors shoes and clothing sub-brand, which attempted to translate its brand mantra into a less competitive arena.



**Nike’s brand mantra of “authentic athletic performance” is exemplified by athletes such as Roger Federer.**

*Source: Jean Catuffe, Pacific Coast News / Newscom*