

What's in it For the Customer?

Anyone who is going to spend money usually wants to know what the purchase will do for him or her. In fact, 70% of all purchases are made on an emotional level. So for the most part, buyers aren't concerned about the logical points of the purchase. If they were, the vast majority of us would be driving small, fuel-efficient cars with one-speaker radios.

Think of your brand as a promise ... a promise you make to your clients, prospects, employees, and even your vendors. It is necessary that you are able to back it up. You cannot build a successful, long-term brand on unsupported claims and wishful thinking.

To separate you from your competition, your brand -- your promise -- has to differentiate you from others in the minds of your prospects. This is the reason you cannot use quality, integrity, or price when positioning yourself in your marketplace. So many companies claim to offer these particular characteristics that none of them stand out from the others.

Logos, brochures, advertising and other forms of marketing may, in certain instances, be individual components of a branding campaign, but unless they are part of the system of determining a company's capabilities, direction, opportunities, and indeed its essence, they cannot--and should not--be referred to as branding. To say that a new logo, for instance, is equivalent to a new brand is to believe that I can compete at Daytona International Speedway by slapping decals all over my car. Even if it ends up looking good, it's still not ready to -- or able to -- compete.

What this all boils down to is the fact that every business -- including yours -- has a brand. The question is whether your brand is being determined by outside factors, or if are you actively building it on your terms.