

Title:

Branding and Employee Communication

Word Count:

479

Summary:

The ideas behind branding, which allow companies to build trust and good will in their products or services, can also be used to enhance employee communication.

Keywords:

branding, communication, employee communication

Article Body:

In the I-HR newsletter, moderator Beth N. Carvin asked if the idea of branding could be used effectively to improve productivity and retention. This is an expanded version of my response to her question:

Yes, I think you can use the idea of branding as a tool for improving employee productivity and retention.

Let's approach it from the perspective of a manager communicating with his or her subordinates. If the manager sets out to build a positive reputation over time and over a series of messages, then we might say he or she is embarking on a branding exercise. It's an attempt to create the trust and goodwill necessary to have messages both accepted and acted upon.

Marketers branding products do essentially the same thing: send out a series of messages designed to build a positive reputation over time.

And, when messages to employees generate trust and goodwill, then communication sent after that can be used communication to increase productivity and retention.

For example, in publishing employee newsletters for my corporate clients, I've always emphasized the need to provide articles and information of value to readers (the employees). By doing that, employees come to see their company newsletter as a useful resource, and not management propaganda. That, in turn, opens the door to asking employees to do or not do certain things (safety measures, for instance), and getting a positive response from them.

In a sense, referring to this process of building trust and goodwill as branding

might be just a semantic exercise. However, I think that when we put a name to a process, we make it easier to comprehend and follow. And, that may be the real value of referring to branding in the context of employee communication.

Let's also look at this issue in a broader sense, too, because it's important to remember the different roles of communication in productivity and retention. Three generic types of communication figure in our thinking: instructional, contextual, and motivational.

Instructional communication provides information that helps others do their jobs more efficiently. Contextual communication provides the bigger picture, which should help recipients do their jobs more effectively. And motivational communication shows recipients the benefits of responding as we've requested.

To build trust and goodwill, the instructional communication should be accurate, timely, and functional. The people who receive our messages should be able to act on them, and know they can act on them with confidence.

The contextual communication should be relevant and helpful. It should put the issue into a framework that helps others understand how specific tasks or issues fit into the strategic flow.

And, the motivational communication should focus on them, not on you. It should show them the importance of their contributions.

In summary, think of branding as the process of building trust and goodwill, a process that makes it possible to increase productivity and retention through communication.