



Jack Sims

16 Branding Truths

1.

Your “Brand Identity” is how you want your brand to be perceived, but the only image that counts is that of the customer’s. This is fundamental to the growth of your business and it is one area that you should consistently return to and make sure it is still relevant if you want to continue making an impact in your market. When you are developing your “Brand Identity” make sure that you hire or use people who are truly qualified, remember it’s not what you pay for the creative service, it’s the difference in what you receive.

2.

Make sure that you keep your brand focuses on what got you to where you are. Don’t try to be all things to all people: Trust me when I tell you “Focus precedes success”. When you do not keep your focus, this is one area that can hurt you. When you start getting some modicum of success you can easily get encouraged by people who frankly are not qualified to encourage you getting into areas of business that you should not. Stay focused!

3.

Beware of line extensions, sometimes trying to be all things to all people can be deadly. But if you do insist on line extensions make sure there is a natural fit with the base business that you are in.... for instance caterpillar work boots are a great line extension, BIC perfume is not!

4.

Invest in your brand, even when you don't think it's financially viable; the payback will come in the long run. At some point in time there will be a downturn in your market when your competition will stop advertising and promoting. That's when you have to be bold and continue with your plan that you initially created, this will get you more brand share at the cheapest possible price. Be willing to wait!

5.

In the years before you have a big budget, think street smart, think “creatively”. In other words think of different, unusual and inexpensive ways of reaching your customers and potential customers, and look for opportunities in places that your competition has not thought of. Guerilla or localized Marketing is a huge opportunity and will not hurt your budget too much. There is plenty of information on the subject on the net and many books that you can find.

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6.

When you are seeing some success and your budgets are getting fatter and you can afford mainstream communications, keep thinking creatively out of the box and keep on marketing. Think the way you did when you were starting out!

7.

Provide everyone in the organization with written instructions about how they intersect with the marketing plan and live the brand. Make sure that you write clear and concise communication guidelines, for all of the parties involved in implementing your brand image. Remember, if you can't write it down, how will anyone else be able to communicate it?

8.

Appoint one person in your organization who is to be the "Guardian of the Brand", they should sign off and be responsible for the brand's consistency. I can't tell you how important this is, believe me from years of experience, too many branding or creative cooks spoil the broth and since any message that communicates an expectation is an act of branding, be fanatic about making certain that every logo, every uniform, every letterhead, every thing communicates the same message. Creating the look and feel that you want your brand to emit is crucial in gaining success in the marketplace. There are many steps to this process and do not take them lightly. Hire the right people, do the subject due diligence, or read my book "Growing small businesses into Big Brands".

9.

Don't forget that every person that works in the company "IS THE BRAND" and they have to live it!

10.

When you have finalized an image or campaign on your product, stick with it, I promise you that you will tire of it before 10% of your potential customers have even seen it.

11.

When you make a claim about your product, make sure it is one that you can own, just ask yourself, can my competitors say this about their product too?

12.

Markets love winners. So, if you can make a #1 statement of any sort, claim it! You may not be #1 in the country but you might be #1 in your town, whatever you are if you are #1, tell people that you are!

13.

Sell quality. If all things are equal, consumers will usually choose the product with a quality image. Remember that people usually value a product, directly in proportion to what they pay for it. Price is what you pay, but value is what you get!

14.

If you use "Borrowed Equity", make sure that the partner product is congruent with your own, gives credibility to yours, and supports its position. This area of marketing is growing at an alarming rate due to the overall costs of communication. Make sure that the partner company really adds value to what you are bringing to market with them, only "borrow the good stuff". However when done right it is a great asset.

15.

Constantly monitor how your brand is perceived by the market. Changes in how they react in terms of awareness, value, loyalty, satisfaction and other traits could be a clue for your next product, marketing plan or market differentiator.

16.

Whatever else you do, spend time with the people who buy your brand.....your customers!

These 16 Branding Truths have worked for me and my clients, I hope they work for you too!



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