



Powerful Healthcare Marketing Communications Solutions

B.U.I.L.D. A Great Brand

Powerful brands are built, not born. A quick perusal of global marketing consultancy Interbrand's fifth annual ranking of the world's top 100 brands clearly demonstrates this fact. Released last summer, Interbrand's listing illustrates the value of having a disciplined and methodical approach to brand building. According to Interbrand, the most valuable brands "focused ruthlessly on every detail of their brands, honing simple, cohesive, [consistent] identities."

That's a great insight, but where does that leave the small or medium-sized organization? Most do not have the resources to mount a comprehensive global branding campaign. Are there any methods employed by the "big boys (and girls)" that they could apply to their branding efforts?

Fortunately, the answer to this question is yes. Simply put, for branding success think: B.U.I.L.D. B.U.I.L.D. stands for Big, Unrelenting, Intelligence, Love and Daring. Read on to learn more about this concept.

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B = Big

The best brands are big – and I don't mean in resources. Rather, they take up a lot of "head space" by making an impact. When you encounter a big brand, you immediately know what it stands for.

Take the restaurant chain Cheeburger Cheeburger. Now that's a big brand. This fast-growing franchise's focus is on serving good cheeseburgers the old fashioned way. This concept is reinforced in everything from the décor of their restaurants (fifties diner) to their menu (four different burger sizes with lots of cheese and topping options).

Millions of people have embraced Cheeburger Cheeburger's unique, fun-loving brand. New restaurants are opening regularly and Entrepreneur Magazine ranked Cheeburger Cheeburger as America's number-one full-service burger franchise in 2003.

U = Unrelenting

Successful brands are unrelenting in their consistency. According to Interbrand, large companies achieve consistency by operating "as a single [brand] everywhere in the world." For example, the bank HSBC communicates the same effective message everywhere it operates: "The world's local bank."

Organizations of all sizes can achieve consistency by ensuring that they present a uniform image to all of their customers or constituents. Logos, letterhead, Web sites and other collateral materials should be similar. In addition, organizations should engage in activities that reinforce their brand. To use an extreme example, a not-for-profit specializing in Everglades clean-up should devote 90 percent of its efforts to this activity. People and potential donors will be confused if the organization suddenly begins touting itself as a healthcare insurance advocate.

I = Intelligence

To remain on top, powerhouse brands have to be intelligent. This is especially important in today's high-technology world. One example of an intelligent brand is Coke, which Interbrand ranked number-one in overall brand value.

Coke established its brand through traditional television and print (newspaper, magazine) advertising. Now, Coca-Cola has decreased its traditional advertising spending and moved toward new on-line and entertainment communications channels – partly through product placement.

Smaller organizations can practice intelligent branding by exploiting new trends in how people consume information. For example, a mid-sized public relations firm wishing to reinforce its reputation for innovation and insightful analysis might launch a blog or weekly podcast.

L = Love

Customers appreciate and reward brands that care about the product or service they produce. Much has been made of Apple's canny use of MP3 technology to establish itself as a global leader in on-line music. However, another pillar of Apple's success is the fact that the company clearly loves making innovative and quality wares. Everything from the design to the packaging of Apple's products is well conceived.

To establish a great brand, organizations should love what they produce and care about their customers or constituents. Nothing will undermine a brand's value more than a poorly developed product or service. In addition, organizations should be quick to correct problems whenever they arise.

D = Daring

Top-flight brands have to be daring -- within reason. If aligned with an organization's overall goals, risk-taking can be very beneficial. BMW is one example. The company wanted to reinforce its brand value with customers that are increasingly tuning out advertising. It picked an unlikely solution: short Internet films. The films, which began appearing in 2001, featured BMW cars and were produced by top directors like John Woo. BMW's risk was rewarded by an 8 percent rise in its brand value between 2004 and 2005, as measured by Interbrand.

Organizations should consider taking calculated risks to reinforce or reignite their brands. This might mean partnering with an organization in a different industry to achieve shared objectives. Being open to a little risk may reap great rewards.

Building great brands requires know-how, creativity and a little luck. However, with perseverance and discipline, organizations of all sizes can achieve branding success.

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