

BRAND DEVELOPMENT, BRANDING and INTERNAL ADOPTION: PARTNERS FOR LONG-TERM BUSINESS SUCCESS

One of the most confused concepts in business management today is the distinction between brand development or strategy and branding. Many people in the marketing business use the terms interchangeably. They do not have the tools or understanding of what each process entails. Small agencies, large agencies, PR firms, design firms....many run around talking about being masters of branding without really understanding what that really means. As one expert on the subject revealed, "Branding is the most oversold and least understood expertise."

In truth, most organizations need both of these disciplines and this paper is provided to help senior level marketers, presidents and CEO's to understand the difference so they can make the best decision for their companies.

Branding is defined as the constant use of color, graphics, type and messaging (typically in public relations strategies) to ensure consistency in a company's advertising and PR program. Branding is the execution of the marketing and PR plan. It is not, however, the strategic foundation of that plan. That is where Brand Development steps in.

DISCOVERING THE BRAND

Brand Development is the discovery of a brand's distinction and the development of communication of that distinction. Period. And that distinction, realized through a set of Unique Selling Propositions or USPs is carried forward into the company's branding efforts—advertising, collaterals, direct mail, PR, web/online, etc. What we say over and over to our clients is simply this: the definition of a brand is, "A Claim of Distinction." Without distinction, your brand is either indistinct or generic or the worst-case scenario, a commodity. And

without a point of distinction in our marketing efforts, the message will more than likely be about features and benefits. That leads to the black hole of marketing—competing with other features and benefits not with other brands. And that means trouble. Brand Development and Branding Tactical Plans are partners for the long-term success of a company's business strategy.

To get there, a formal brand discovery process is initiated with senior management and in private firms, ownership.

This uncovers the brand's true distinction of "Brand Franchise." The Brand Franchise incorporates the USPs that no other brand in the category can say, backed up by evidentiary analysis. Without truthful backup, the brand's USPs are simply wishes or hopes. The truth sets us free and makes the brand strategy legitimate. The next step is to create a written and visual platform that consistently communicates

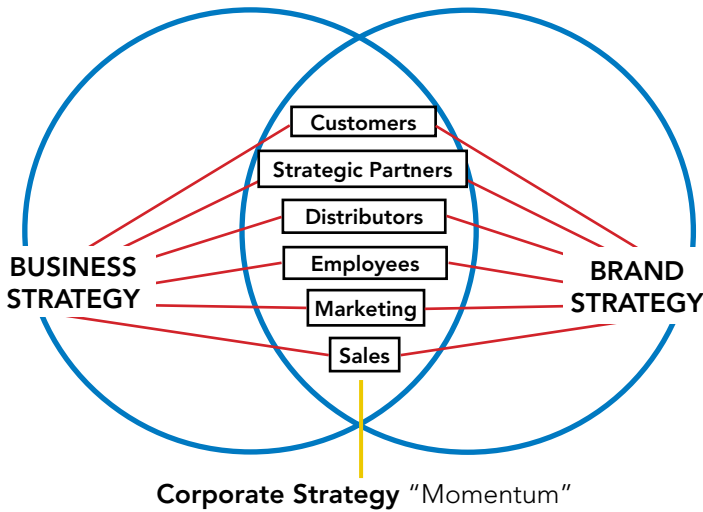
that differentiation, usually in the form of a positioning statement. This brings the brand to life in words and design as well as PR and internal adoption messaging.

BRAND DEVELOPMENT BUILDS BUSINESSES

It must be understood that Brand Development is a business strategy, not a marketing strategy. It must stem from the top levels of the organization and permeate through the entire organization. Brand Strategy and Business Strategy work together to drive a business forward. (see chart on following page). A company's commitment to bring the brand to life internally is critical to success and begins with a Brand Adoption Strategy and Plan.

"A company's commitment to bring the brand to life internally is critical to success and begins with a Brand Adoption Strategy and Plan."

Alignment: Business & Brand Strategy



brand is, very simply, a business primed for success.” More specifically, a solid and consistent brand strategy delivered through branding efforts and internal adoption processes lead to:

- Increased profitability
- Reduction in vulnerability to competition
- Clear and consistent employee communications about the company, its mission, etc.
- Employee satisfaction
- Increased value of the company through increased brand valuation*

*Many Fortune 500 company’s brand value accounts for more than 50% of total company value.

Internal Brand Adoption takes the Brand Strategy and brings it to life at all levels of the organization. Consider

Ritz Carlton Hotels, a company whose brand distinction is clear and non-negotiable. The company differentiates its properties on the quality of service delivered every hour of every day by 28,000 employees. No small task. This does not happen with team-building functions where housekeepers and front desk staffs run the obstacle course. It happens through a formal brand adoption process that lives at all levels of the organization. The company’s internal brand positioning statement, “Ladies and Gentlemen Serving Ladies and Gentlemen” is brought to life through systems, standards and measurement. From the interview process to daily management, the company executes flawlessly its standards, 3-Steps of Service and 20 Basics of Quality Service. We believe any successful Brand Strategy must incorporate the Internal Adoption Strategy as a key to help create consistency in employee mission, purpose and brand message delivery.

“Together, these components of brand building work in harmony to create long term business success.”

Together, these components of brand building work in harmony to create long-term business success. One

without the other is an incomplete process. Finding and establishing the company’s unique claim of distinction, then rolling that out into the marketplace and into the organization through Branding and Internal Adoption processes creates the triad of successful brand development. The result, achieving the company’s business objectives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Cohn is the President, CEO and Chief Brand Strategist of Cohn Marketing, a Denver, Colo.–based brand development, marketing and PR firm. Cohn spent 16 years in the shopping center industry marketing super-regional malls and destination attractions throughout the U.S. Cohn Marketing’s team of 20 works within the broad definition of the destination category including retail real estate, homebuilding, community development, tourism, and retail categories. Cohn Marketing is a member of the Brand Establishment alliance of marketing firms committed to assisting organizations on delivering breakthrough results through consistent brand strategy and brand implementation programs. To learn more about Cohn Marketing and its services, please contact Jeff Cohn at 303-839-1415 x30 or Jeff@CohnMarketing.com.

BRAND DEVELOPMENT LEADS TO RESULTS

Why should a company invest in Brand Development? Consider the comments of David D’Allesandro, CEO of John Hancock Insurance., “A Business based on