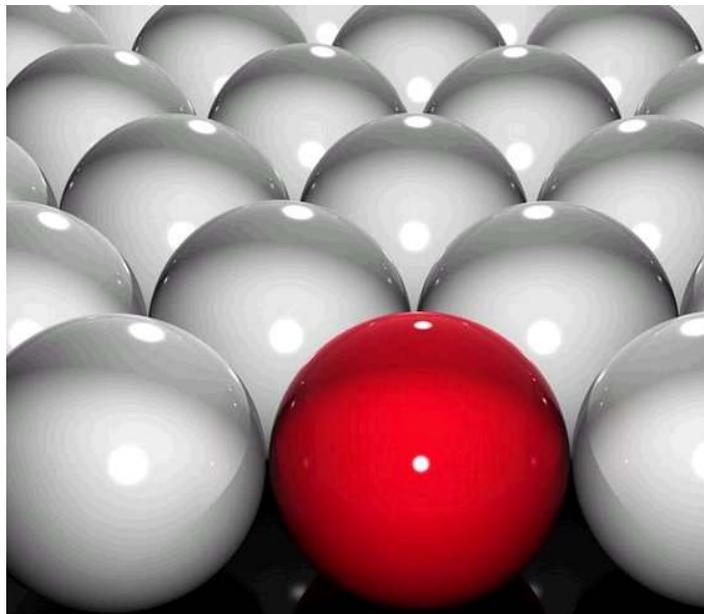


A Special *Character-Wise* Report

2 April, 2012

Branding is Not a Corporate Responsibility



By Joseph Tan
Good Monday Consulting

Branding is Not a Corporate Responsibility

What is branding? Branding is the cumulative effect of consistent experiences. The more consistent I am to the values I espoused – the stronger brand connection becomes and therefore soliciting loyalty. We cannot speak of “brand loyalty” as some sort of a corporate exercise which is devoid of individual responsibility; it is the consistent character of the *individual* which collectively contributes to the organizational ethos. In short, branding is about buy-in and ownership at the grassroots level.

The trouble is most branding exercises take place in the high tower of management than in the thick of operational grassroots.

Before you get carried away with redesigning the logo and the corporate colors, I encourage you to reflect on three key points of “branding-readiness” – unless, you have this points of readiness in place, your logo re-design will only result in superficial awareness.

Point 1 : Do you have proven performance or just potential promise?

A truly strong brand is that which reinforces current practices. That means when someone hears the mention of your company, can they relate positive, past and proven performance? The fact of the matter is that while we judge ourselves on our *intentions*, others judge us by our *actions*. What you feel about the organization is not as important as what others *experience* when they come in contact with you. The word “hypocrisy” comes to mind when I observe companies who go through the visual redesigns but the attitude and behavior of employees remain the same – you have just merely put on new clothes on the same, old person. Put in the effort to live up to your current professed values first and then when practice confirms proclamation, then you are ready to announce to the world what has *already* been happening in the company. In this way, branding confirms reality rather than promising a virtual one.

Point 2 : Do you have a loyal and committed management team?

Nothing hurts a company’s reputation more than the exodus of leaders! In reality, the health of the organization is inextricably linked with the state of leadership – that’s why when a scandal hits, it is the leader who resigns, not the production operator! A strong branding exercise presumes the existence of an equally strong leadership team and that there is unity (not uniformity) with a common hope and vision for the future. Unless you have a loyal and committed team in the *present*, how are you going to convince your customers that you will be there for them in the *future*?

Point 3 : Do you recognize your employees beyond just the bottom-line results?

Guard against an *utilitarian* attitude towards employees and coworkers. Recognize that employees are more than just “a dot” on the organization chart. Each employee represents a unique individual – if coached properly, will yield a greater return on your training investment. Don’t just recognize those who bring in the sales dollar - what about those in finance, admin, logistics, production, quality and the list goes on. Those who take care of the supplies are just as important as those who yield the sword during the battle. Practice a culture of recognition for good character in addition to recognizing for exceptional performance. Then employees will see that in this company *how* we do our job is as important as *what* we do in our job.

So, are you still game for a corporate or departmental “makeover”? Get your foundations right first. Put in the effort to have the right substance in place and then the structure will look good. Branding is the structure. Character is the substance.

Think about it.

For an audio version of this article, please download from :

http://www.goodmonday.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/10801018/branding_not_corporate_responsibility.mp3