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Branding Pitfalls of Manufacturing

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WHETHER YOU'RE A WELL-KNOWN BLUE-CHIP BRAND OR AN UNKNOWN, THE BRANDING OF YOUR PRODUCT CAN PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN ITS SUCCESS IN THE MARKETPLACE, BOTH ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL FRONTS.

Gone are the days of manufacturing the 'T' Fords, when there was no other competition in the United States in the 1920s. And of course before that was Karl Benz in Germany, who is generally acknowledged as the inventor of the modern automobile. It was an integral design, without the adaptation of other existing components, and included several new technological elements to create a new concept. He began to sell these vehicles in 1888. Innovation began well before iPads and hybrid cars.

Henry Ford didn't invent the automobile or the assembly line. However, he changed the car industry by producing cars that everyone could afford to purchase. So what does all of this mean? Well, Henry and Karl, probably not realising it, created brands that would last for over a century. The importance of their brand and its spot in the marketplace was as critical from a communication perspective a century ago as it is now.

And here comes the important part.

Marketing is communication. Every aspect of your brand, and how it's communicated, is marketing. Everything communicated in and around and about your brand creates a perception in the mind of the marketplace.

Let's not be scared. Being a brand-focused, marketing-led organisation is not as hard as some people may think. So, as a manufacturer, what are some of the pitfalls to avoid when it comes to your brand so that the right perceptions are created in the mind of the marketplace?

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Not investigating the marketplace for competition

One of the key elements of marketing anything is communicating it to the marketplace in an easy-to-comprehend fashion. Communicating your brand is generally a battle of the minds (your clients') more than anything else. Getting in their mind first is a big step in the right direction, otherwise you're forever battling to get inside. To know which part of the mind to accommodate, you need to know what part of the mind your competition is playing in. Is it based on the audience, price, colour, location? You need to be in the part of the mind that hasn't been taken by your competition. You want to be towards the top of the list, if not the first. If you're not first into a market, it makes the journey a lot more difficult.

Having quality as your only point of difference

In the commercial world we live in, the expectations of customers and clients are that the product is going to be of a decent standard regardless of price. Yes, you generally get what you pay for most of the time; but there comes a time where the 'quality' of your product is not enough to

differentiate you in the marketplace. More importantly, it's not enough in the minds of your customers and clients, current and new, who are out there in the marketplace looking for your category. The quality of your product is open to interpretation by critics, genuine and phoney. To be reliant on positive opinion in this day and age, where people can access all types of information and feedback from anywhere, is dangerous, in my opinion.

Not having a 'positioning'

Communicating vagueness or ego is played out too many times in the branding space marketplace. You should be asking yourself: what is my brand really communicating? The most important thing we should be doing is owning a piece of real estate in the minds of

customers and clients. This is known as the positioning of your product. Generally, this positioning defines what you do, as clear as day, in the marketplace. You need to ask yourself:

what position does my brand own in the marketplace? Am I the cheapest in my category? Am I the most expensive? Am I the first? Am I targeting someone that no one else has? Am I targeting a region? You need to own a position in the mind that is beyond quality. Minds are cluttered, so find a space and fill it.

Not being consistent in your communication

So now that you have a position in the mind of your current and potential clientele, are you staying true to your brand's positioning? I often see brands

embarrassing themselves by giving in to retailers or wholesalers for the sake of a one-off sale. If you're an exclusive brand, don't be loose on the discounts. If you're a cheap brand, don't try to be glamorous. If your brand targets teens, don't try to go after grown men at the same time with the same brand. If you want to target someone else, start a new brand (and a new brand name) completely. Be consistent in your communication so that people remember what your brand is about. Constant, consistent reinforcement is critical to stay in the position where you belong in people's minds.

Creating an unnecessary line extension

Clearasil equals pimple cream for teenagers. A number of years ago, a line extension of this brand was created to target men; however, given the positioning of Clearasil in the minds of consumers, the line extension brand targeting men hasn't had the impact that the original Clearasil brand has had with teenagers for so many years. So if you want to start another brand, create a new name and look completely. What position will the new brand have in the minds of potential and current clientele? What I see happen time and time again is that people believe their brand has so much equity that they can slap it on anything and it will sell. This is almost never the case. Of course, there have been some good examples of line extensions, but generally it's because they have been first in the new category or first in the minds because they have had millions to throw at getting there (and quite often this doesn't work, either).

This method of branding a product is often the beginning of the end for many new 'brands'. How about the cereal companies that brand their health bars the same as ▶





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their cereal and just put ‘bar’ at the end of the name? When there are brands that are already in the marketplace that own the ‘health bar’ category, slapping a well-known cereal brand on a health bar doesn’t automatically equal success.

Discounts or sales promotions will only get you so far, until finally it’s realised that the line-extension brand has no equity on its own.

Not creating a new category and new demand

Instead of creating a line extension, and failing before you even start, give your new brand a new name – and, most importantly, make sure it has a new focus, a clear and concise positioning for its new audience. Have you checked out the competition? All the same rules apply. You need to make sure you’re creating the right perceptions of this new brand and allowing it to blossom and create its own credibility and brand equity. Don’t blur the minds of your core customers. By branding correctly, targeting the right audience, positioning the right way, you can create a whole new customer base, and perhaps a new category in the process.

Starting a new category on your own as a brand is always difficult, but it puts you in the driving seat to create the demand and influence the market. Education is key in a new category. People are always sceptical of something new, so they want to hear

good things from other people, not just from you. The General Manager of Sevenhill Cellars (a good drop, by the way) in South Australia, Neville Rowe, explained to me that in the past 20 years, the wine market has informed the market (that’s you and me who buy the wine) about what we should like and what we should look for in a good wine. They have provided education to the industry, as well as interest and confidence in the category. Wine-makers’ education in the marketplace has played a huge role in the impact on their industry. Well done to the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation, the industry group set up to assist the industry.

Scaring off competition

Depending on the category, competition is good. The promotion of your category can be a great thing for your brand and business, especially if the category is a new one and the market is sceptical of the innovation. To have a competitor that communicates itself and the category well is sometimes as good as doing it yourself!

Not choosing relevant tools to communicate your brand

How you choose to communicate your brand is the easy part once your positioning is right. Now it’s about reaching your marketplace at the right times and in the right places. Make it relevant, targeted

and focused. This will make the communication budget work at its capacity.

Letting your clients create unnecessary perceptions

Quite often, I hear about the battle of having to reduce prices or increase your range of products to get great shelf space in the aisles. We live in a constant atmosphere where everything seems to be discounted every day of the week. How long can this go on without being of detriment to a brand?

Not having an innovative brand

If your brand – its look and feel, its production processes, as well as the innovation and initiative around creating new brands – is not a forefront thought within your organisation, the perception in the marketplace can be of a stale and outdated business and brand. Customers and clients are always looking for the newest of products and categories, the most modern and the most efficient. You need to keep this at the forefront of your business’s organisational philosophy. A brand is more than just a logo – it penetrates into all facets of your business and is perceived accordingly. 🍷