

Building your brand

IT'S TIME TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR BRAND AND YOUR COMPANY'S CORE OFFERING STANDS FOR SOMETHING IN THE MIND OF THE MARKETPLACE, WRITES **MICHAEL KAVA**.

If someone asked you to describe what your company's brand stands for in seven words, could you do it without blinking?

What are the chances that your competition would answer the same question the same way that you do?

In what is a highly competitive industry, the ever growing, expanding and diversified (an overused term) residential technology and installation industry is as broad or as specialised as its passionate members make it. Like any industry, it can also grow as people start to become less diversified and instead, more focused and specialised in what they do.

Looking back at history, if someone was first in the minds of their clientele, introduced something new to the marketplace, were consistent in their communication, were innovative or were extremely specialised, they would be the leaders of industry.

So, what does all this mean?

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, what are some of the key items we need to help us build our brand?

UNDERSTANDING WHO YOUR COMPETITION IS

Without knowing who your competition is, how can you expect people to come to you without giving them a reason? How can you be able to differentiate your brand from the competition? How can you possibly have your clients choose you over the next person when you don't even know why you're different to that 'next person'? If you don't know what you do differently to the competition, how can you expect your customers to?

People like choice and want to be able to choose. And at the end of the day, people want to be able choose the leader in their chosen field. You need to be able to own that space in the mind of current and potential clients. They say in sport that a

winning team is built on good defence. Well in marketing, it's built on great attack.

POSITIONING YOUR BRAND IN A DIFFERENT MINDSPACE TO THE COMPETITION

This is key. In the over-communicated society that we live in, what space of the mind does your service or product own in the minds of the marketplace?

Being first in the mind of prospective clients can greatly assist brands to position themselves in the mindscape that they want, that piece of the mind they can call their own.

And whether it be a service, product or person, they're all brands. It pays to be first in people's minds, people generally remember if that's the case.

COMMUNICATING YOUR POSITIONING TO THE MARKETPLACE

It's great to have a position, but you also need to reinforce this position and communicate it to the market. Half of the problem out in the marketplace is that people aren't actually communicating what their business does, what they're good at and what they stand for. If you're different, you have a focus and a speciality and you have a good story to tell (it's great if you can tick all these boxes), people want to know about it. If you don't have anything new to say or focus on, don't bother.

BEING CONSISTENT IN YOUR BRAND COMMUNICATION

Quite often, ego can get in the way of making the right decision for your business and brand. What I see happening more and more is companies acquiring new businesses, but instead of nurturing the current brand equity of the business bought, companies feel the need to put the new acquired service under their brand because of their perceived brand power. As a brand, if the new core offering doesn't fall into the same pile as the acquiring brands core offering, leave the brands separate!

I know architects who focus on working with school designs. I know building certifiers that focus only on residential homes. I know façade companies that only work with the world's best builders. I know valuation companies that only value in the residential market. All have a focus, all are specialised and all stay true to what their brand stands for, and its no surprise they're also pretty good at what they do too.

BE EFFECTIVE IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

Most of the time due to poor planning, a large majority of marketing and communication is executed in an adhoc manner by businesses. Plenty of planning for the year's activities is key to stay to budget, but to also stay true to the businesses objectives. Without a plan and set of objectives, flying in the wind will get you nowhere. I've seen many businesses

create adhoc marketing activity and wonder why it all ends in tears. It also gives proper marketers a bad name.

ACT LIKE A LEADER, NOT A FOLLOWER

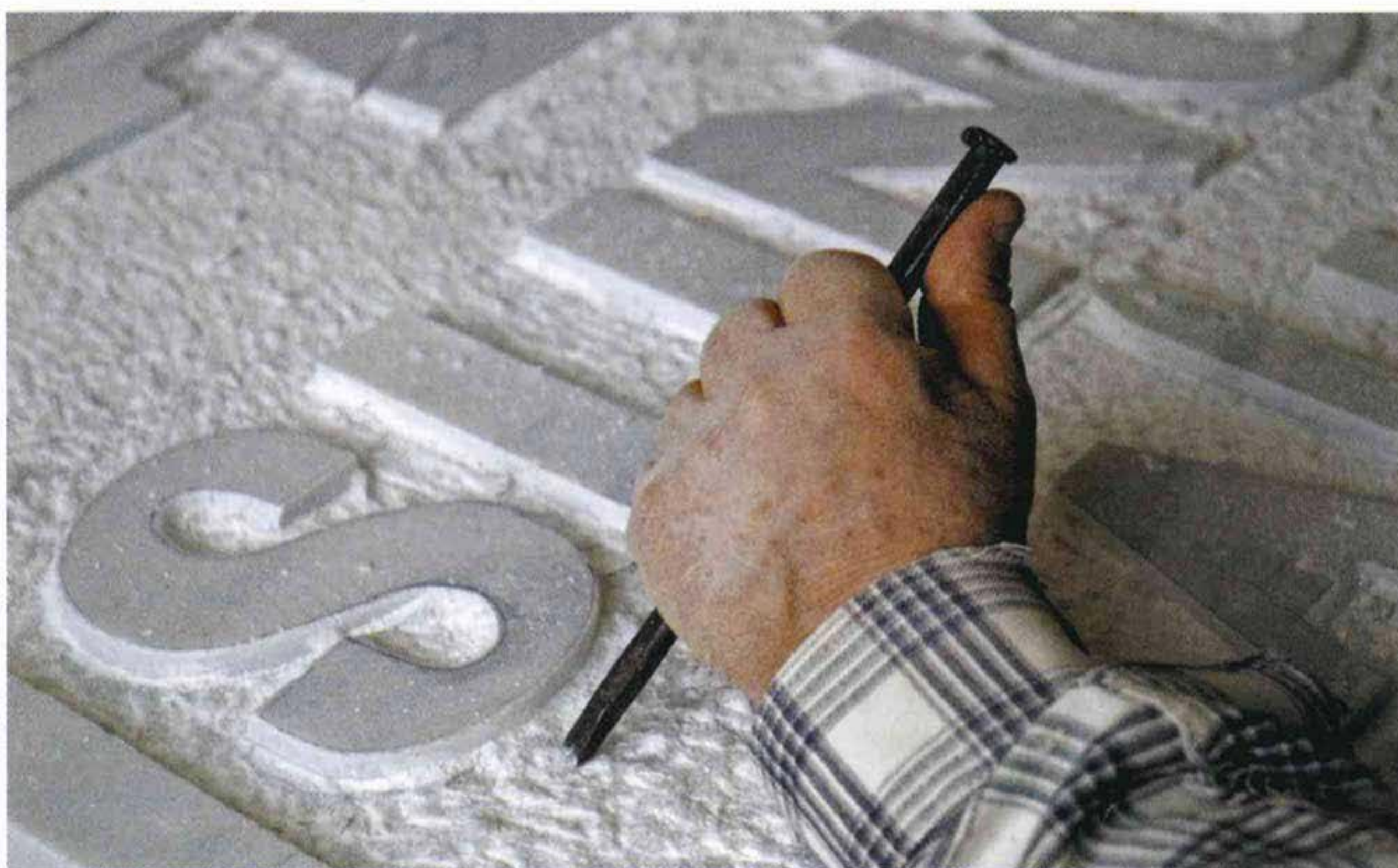
Like in everyday life, people want to be associated with the leaders of the bunch. In Iceland in the year 1200, a unique, small population of sheep developed, displaying outstanding abilities to help farmers and shepherds to manage the flock on pastures. These sheep are called Leadersheep. Most of the Leadersheep are coloured and horned, usually weighing less than the normal sheep because they have been selected for their intelligence, not their meatiness. They often head out of the sheep-house first, keeping an eye out for dangers and walking in front of the flock when driven to or from the pastures...true leaders of their industry!

I think we can learn from sheep.

People and businesses gravitate to the leaders of their industry, attracting the right staff, the right clients and the right suppliers for your business. Don't act like a leader, fall by the wayside and attract all the wrong people to your business and brand, and you will create the wrong perception to the marketplace. Not a good way to go.

A RELEVANT WEB PROFILE

Nine out of 10 people these days will always turn to the digital version of your company brochure or your website. Showing off your recent products or projects, some great testimonials from happy clients, some relevant history and credibility about your business and its structure are all relevant items, that if clearly and graphically displayed, can pay dividends. **CH**



TIPS

FROM THE FRONTLINE

There's an immense amount of knowledge floating around in the local home automation market. Programmers and installers, even electricians, who have worked tirelessly to master their crafts have years of experience, often brought about through trial and error.

CONNECTED HOME

Wouldn't it be great to learn from their mistakes?

Well, at *Connected Home*, we want to make that possible. If you're an experienced integrator, we want your help in the form of tips and advice for the younger and less experienced members of our industry.



So if you have developed a shortcut, or have noticed a common mistake in the industry (and can explain how to avoid/fix it), send us the details and help to build the skills of Australian and New Zealand installers. If you do, and it is featured in the magazine, we'll even reward you with a free one-year subscription to ManSpace Magazine - the ultimate magazine for men.

Email your tips to paulskelton@build.com.au