

# Brand Offensive

## Are you offending the right people?

### Why build a brand?

There is only one reason to build a strong brand – to help you make more profit. That profit comes from more sales and/or high prices. Coke, McDonalds and Nike are branding super stars. Because of their powerful brands they make more profit. Their branding enables them to sell more and at a higher price. Coke and Nike clearly sell their products at a high profit margin. Even McDonalds which sells a low priced product is making a strong profit because of the strength of their brand and their cost efficient systems. Price leaders need to be highly efficient to survive.

If you are a coffee drinker in Canada then Tim Hortons will be on the tip of your tongue when you hear the word coffee. Why? Because of the power and penetration of the Tim Hortons brand. If you know how profitable Tim Hortons is selling inexpensive coffee then you can appreciate the profitability of uber priced coffee sellers, Second Cup and Starbucks.

### What branding mistakes must you avoid?

The smaller you are the less you can afford to make branding mistakes. Coke made a huge branding mistake when they launched New Coke. Lucky for them they had lots of money to fix the mistake. I imagine that some heads rolled over that disaster. The New Coke fiasco demonstrated the importance of understanding your brand. The Coke brand was never about taste – that was the Pepsi brand. The Coke brand was about history, dependability and familiarity. When they launched New Coke that reversal was an assault on their brand hence the violent backlash from their customers. Lucky for Coke their customers revolted and Coke was smart enough to correct their mistake quickly.

Lesson – you can change your logo, fonts, colours, tagline, and jingle – but don't change your brand. Coke changes those things every six or seven years with no protest from customers. That tells you that those things don't define the brand. The only people that get excited about logos and jingles are the people who create them or are hired to protect them.

Don't let tactical experts determine strategy.

Never allow your graphic designers to portray themselves as branding experts. Don't let tactical experts determine strategy. They might be good people – but might not appreciate the strategy of branding. They are packaging experts. Packaging is not the brand but it

should reflect the brand. Graphic design is not branding. You need to decide and commit to your brand first. Function should define form. Never allow form to sabotage function.

A costly mistake for small business is to copy the example of mega business on the branding trail. Big business builds brands with this formula. Mass media plus celebrity endorsements plus time. Mass media means print, radio and TV promotion. Celebrity endorsements translates into millions of dollars. Time means 10 to 20 years or more. Coke has been in business for over 100 years.

## What are your branding choices?

Your first decision is, “What do you want your brand to be?” Before you spend a dollar promoting your brand spend the time thinking strategically about what your brand is or could be. A brand is the gut feeling that your customers have for your product or business. How does your product make them feel? That is the brand. The stronger the gut feeling - the stronger your brand. The brand is not necessarily logical but a client who loves your brand will find the logic to justify their feeling. It’s similar to falling in love. Once the feeling exists you will find the logic to justify it.

The easiest and most effective way for small business to build a brand is to build strong relationships with your clients. Relationships are emotional not logical. And good relationships are built by doing all the little things consistently well. Your brand will be a byproduct of building relationships. If you build strong enough relationships the brand is not so important. What’s important is the emotional bond that clients have for you. That bond is the goal.

The second way for small and medium sized business to build their brand requires boldness. You must do three things:

- 1. Take a polarized position**
- 2. Make enemies**
- 3. Create tension**

If you do these three things you will attract the clients that you want and repel the ones you don’t want. The bolder your position the faster and stronger your brand will grow. But be aware – once you take a position you must stay there. Look at the reaction to Coke launching New Coke.

The more tension you create the more likely your campaign will bloom virally. Harley Davidson built their brand this way. People either hate or love Harley. Mac’s Convenience Stores used to be in the milk business. Today they sell snack foods and drinks to teenagers. When Mac’s introduced an icy drink called “Bloody Zit Drink” their target market (teenagers) was delighted and their non-market (adults) were disgusted (which pleased the teens even more).

The music world figured this out decades ago. Every new brand of dance music, from the Lindy to Rock and Roll and Moshing, appealed to young people and annoyed older people.

Mike Holmes of the TV show “Holmes on Homes” has built his brand quickly by following this three-part formula. Donald Trump followed the same formula. People either love or hate these two. Both have had the extra turbo charge from the TV shows – but it is the polarized positioning that defined their brands. They consciously accepted that they would make enemies. They also decided who those enemies would be. Don’t offend indiscriminately. Choose your enemies carefully.

If you are ready to boast your brand, be clear on your purpose. Understand the mindset of your target market – their dreams, pleasures, pains, and enemies. Draw a map of where your competition stands on key issues. Look for the gaps. Pick the one that appears most profitable and a good match for you. Take your position, grow a thick skin, forget about your enemies, and concentrate on delighting your clients. And rake in the profits.

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