



BRAND RANCH

BRAND & MARKETING CONSULTANCY

BRAND DEVELOPEMENT NEWSLETTER

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TIPS & NOTES:

Consistency over time in executing/delivering your brand identity is key to building a “powerful/strong” brand.

You will gain greater insights/innovation by obtaining an outside point-of-view of your business:

- View elements from a consumers view point.
- Reduces the political pressures.
- Provides an un-biased perspective to key questions/solutions.

Listen to your customers, but study their behavior—see how they USE your products and/or services.

Dear Executives:

The New Year is no longer new and we all find ourselves dreading that moment when we must pay the government its share of our income/profits—tax day! This is a great time to review some of the key brand elements that will affect your success as you push into an even more competitive environment, in an economy that faces possible slowdowns due to a host of variables including elections, the Iraq war, a slowing housing market, rising home mortgage delinquency rates, and a fickle stock market.



We encourage you to take this opportunity to conduct what should be an annual review of your brand—a “Brand Audit.” This is a review of brand execution: how consistent you have been across all channels in communicating your brand message or essence to target audiences. As discussed in the previous newsletter, it is critical that all “touch point” messages be consistent in visual characteristics, tone, and manner.

Here are some very simple guidelines and procedures to follow when conducting a Brand Audit:

- Be objective and unbiased
- Take the viewpoint of your consumer/prospects
- Be tough with regards to details
- Make necessary changes to get your brand back on track
- Take the time to do a thorough review—don’t cut corners

If you are unable to accomplish this review internally, it is invariably beneficial to seek outside assistance and help; a fresh point of view is always good.

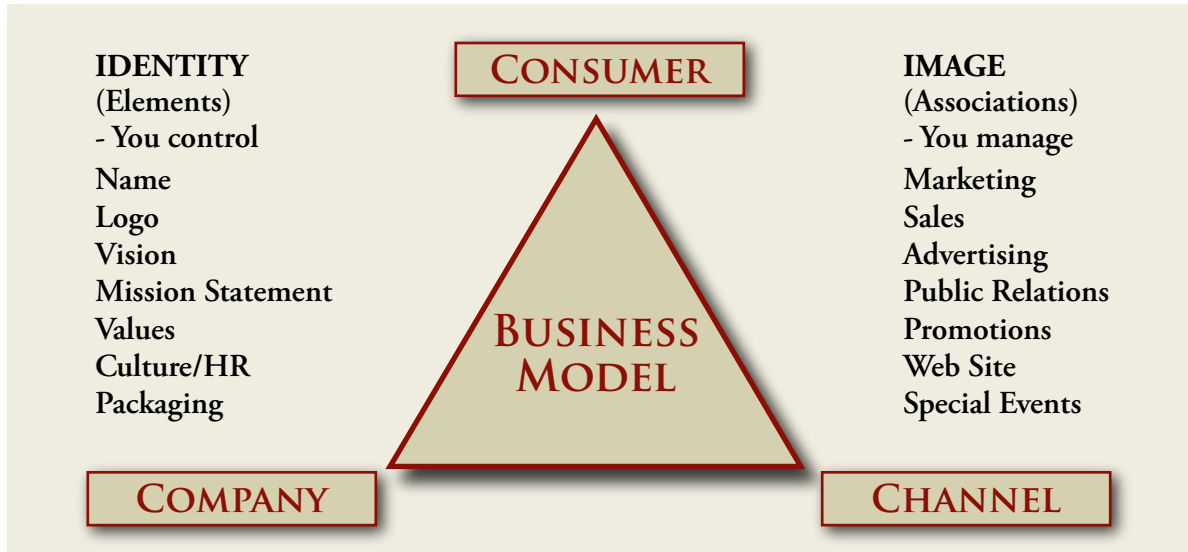
Good luck with your review—your future depends on its findings.

Enjoy the issue,

Michael Blanck
President



BRAND MODEL



This basic brand model presents key elements that must be addressed in order to deliver brand identity and manage brand image. Without active management, you allow the market to dictate or interpret your brand's essence or message.

Some of the key (visual) elements to pay attention to during the Brand Audit are:

Color:

Color is one of the most important components of brand identity because it plays a large role in recall and memory retrieval. Choose a primary color that's appropriate for your company's image, and then use it as the dominant color on all marketing materials. Also, be consistent when selecting support components such as paper stock.

Fonts:

Select one or two fonts for use on all

your materials, including at least one primary serif font and one primary sans-serif font. Avoid using more than two different fonts within the same document. Create a clean and uncomplicated communication platform from which to deliver your brand message.

Key Graphic Element:

Be consistent when using distinctive symbols, shapes, and borders that convey the image you want to communicate. This should be part of how you deliver your brand personality. (For example: color or b/w photos, tool buttons on web sites, and signage.)

Logo Usage:

Your logo is your brand's most basic graphic element. It should appear on all your materials and, when possible, it should appear at the same size and be placed at the same location on

the page. Proportionate resizing is sometimes acceptable, but your logo should never be altered or redrawn. Consistency is paramount.

If your design firm didn't develop a graphics standards manual, create one as soon as possible. This is especially critical for manufacturers or retailers who allow others to use their logo or brand identity in co-op advertising programs. You must control your visual delivery, to both legally protect your trademark and ensure consistent use.

Messaging:

Often referred to as the "tone and manner" of your message, this also must be consistent and delivered to your consumers at every touch point. Using the same voice will help deliver your brand personality—be it friendly, formal, casual, sophisticated, or technical.

“REMEMBER: AWARENESS, RECALL, AND RECOGNITION ARE KEYS TO GROWING YOUR BRAND AND BUSINESS.”

Little things—like consistency in how you describe your category, products and services, key benefits, and consumers—all play a crucial role in differentiating and making your brand relevant to your target audience.

Remember: awareness, recall, and recognition are keys to growing your brand and business. The more consistent your execution, the better you will stand out in an overcrowded marketplace, and the more successful you'll be in building brand loyalty.

If your agency or production companies don't want to adhere to these guidelines, it's time to shop for a new partner in building your brand. Consistency over time builds strong and powerfully branded businesses.

AUDIT PROCESS

At Brand Ranch, we follow these key methods in conducting successful client Brand Audits:

- View everything from a consumer's point-of-view.
- Eliminate departmental biases.
- Review all materials from across the entire organization (business cards to annual reports).
- Encourage all players to be critical of their own work—this will only make the output better in the future.
- Develop a formal report and set of recommendations—make someone accountable.

The process is relatively simple. In an office or conference room (preferably one with postable walls), collect samples of everything that has been produced and used during the past twelve months, and categorize the samples by areas of usage, such as company communications, sales, packaging, and marketing.

Then develop a review process that will evaluate and critique each and every piece against your standards (see above). The best assessments are not scored on a numerical system but are measured in terms of pass/fail. In our review process here at Brand Ranch, we use post-it notes and colored flags to identify and highlight areas that are not in compliance with graphic standards.

It is also important to have all participating departments be a part of this process so no one is left out.

This helps move the process forward to a positive conclusion. It should not be a blame game, but a corrective process to ensure consistency.

Key factors to evaluate:

Overall visual consistency:

- Color—PMS color match
- Paper stocks—color and weight of stocks
- Fonts—consistency in headlines, body copy, legal disclosures, etc.
- Visual graphics
- Language and tone/manner of message communication platforms

Did the piece deliver against the brand essence/positioning statement?

- If not, why?
- How could it have been designed or produced differently?

One strong recommendation that we make to our clients is to develop a “war room” where you not only review your own work (visual, strategic, and so on) but also look at the work of your key competitors. Many times this ongoing process will uncover a strategic shift or change in direction that would otherwise go unnoticed in the early stages. This detection will help you understand how to differentiate your brand and make it more relevant to target audiences.



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REMEMBER—THE FOUR PILLARS OF A SUCCESSFUL AND POWERFUL BRAND ARE:

- **Differentiation**
- **Relevance**
- **Esteem**
- **Knowledge**

Encourage every member of your organization to shop around and collect competitors' products and services. As we discussed in our last newsletter, mystery shopping or just shopping your competitor will tell you a lot about what they are up to. It also provides additional learning and insights that you can use to compete more aggressively and effectively.

Good luck with your Brand Audit!

Make it as much an annual habit as preparing your financials for tax time and Uncle Sam.

