



BRAND RANCH

BRAND & MARKETING
CONSULTANCY

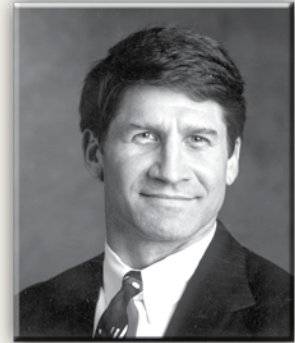
NEWSLETTER

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Dear Executives:

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Brand Ranch newsletter. Through the coming months and years we will address the critical topics that you, as brand stewards, must understand and be knowledgeable about in order to enhance your brand's equity. Branding is not just a hot buzz word; it is one of the essential disciplines that all executives and businesses must understand and embrace to be successful in the 21st Century.



Branding is a broader discipline than marketing and advertising. If that is your feeling then you are going to find this newsletter and our consultancy point-of-view on the subject enlightening and rewarding. If not then maybe you will learn something new that will benefit both you and your organization.

How clearly do your employees understand and manifest your vision? How much do consumers trust your brand name and know what it represents? Why?

Branding is the one discipline that should impact every department, person, and daily decision in your business to ensure that the total consumer experience is delivered with a single-minded focus. The focus should be the primary point of difference for your brand as it relates to your competitive set.

There are a number of ways to talk about branding. Understanding the nomenclature is step one; learning the tools and how to implement the strategies is the difference between reading a book and getting it done – right. At Brand Ranch we set the foundation for branding as follows:

- A brand is something (word, phrase or emotion) that resides in the mind of consumers about a product or service.
- Branding is the added dimensions (associations) that differentiate a product or service from others designed to satisfy the same consumer need/want/desire.

From there we build your brand platform and architecture. The purpose of this newsletter is to address some of the most commonly asked questions and pass along smaller pieces of the complex whole that is branding.

I hope you learn from this newsletter and pass it along to your top managers. If at any time you would like to stop receiving it, please contact us by either email or phone and we will remove you from our mailing list.

Thanks, and enjoy our first issue.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Michael'.

Michael Blanck
President

Size Doesn't Matter!

In our discussions with executives the issue of size comes up all the time. The comments are in the form of "I am too small to think about branding" or "We will deal with that thing later after we are bigger."

If those echo your thoughts or ideas you might not need to worry about branding because you probably won't be in business long enough to care or undertake such an exercise.

Branding should be part of every business...small or large. It is the most fundamental business discipline that, once again, should affect and impact every level of your business. The perfect time to think about branding is when you are planning on starting a business or looking at expanding your business.

As a manager you know how hard it is to change employee's attitudes, habits and behaviors—well, if you adopt branding as a process by which you organize and develop your business model you won't have to make changes in the future. Branding has as much to do with your vision, mission and values as it does with how consumers or prospective customers view your brand. Successful brands are started with a clear internal view and knowledge of what your brand stands for and how each and every employee can positively impact an experience. It starts with a friendly caring voice from your receptionist all the way up to you and how you deal with customers and the media. Every engagement between

your brand (representatives) and your consumer will either generate a positive or negative experience for your brand. Make them count!

Branding is as much about how you and your organization think as well as how they deliver your total brand experience. Every employee should think of ways that they can enhance the consumer experience—never forget that the consumer is the one who dictates who will win and lose in the battle between brands in the marketplace. They vote each and every day by where and how they spend their hard earned money!

Some small local brands that are doing a nice job at delivering a positive brand experience:

- MacKenzie River Company
(A few brand identity issues)
- City Brew Coffee
(Great product and experience)
- Plonk Wine Bar
(Great beverages, service and experience)
- Chico Hot Springs
(Great escape)

Another area that a start up entrepreneurial company should spend more time on is developing a "great" name and brand identity package. Your name and logo is your company's calling card.....make it stand out and be memorable. It will say a lot about you and your organization.

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Compelling Truths in Branding

Branding is a complex set of variables that must be meticulously developed, managed, and executed. However, there are several simple truths that if ignored or overlooked will be disastrous. A few of them are:

Consumer is KING!

Forget this imperative factor and you will suffer the consequences—business failure.

Attitude predicts BEHAVIOR!

If a customer only feels OK about your brand then you are very vulnerable to his/her switching to another alternative based on the littlest incentive or motivation to try a different product/service. However, if your customers are in love with your brand you will be able to withstand almost any and all competitive challenges...make sure your customers love you and what you stand for and offer them.

Consistency over time builds POWER BRANDS!

Branding is not a hit or miss opportunity... it must be executed consistently at every consumer touch point or you risk being perceived as schizophrenic. This causes a situation of cognitive dissonance where consumer experience an uneasy feeling toward a brand resulting in a lost sales opportunity.

Innovation is key to continued SUCCESS! (Brand Relevance is paramount)

In categories where competition is extraordinarily high or in new categories that are going through rapid product/service improvements, one must be very focused on

continuous change. It only takes a few brief instances and you will be roadkill if you do not understand the changes continuously taking place in the marketplace. Just think about the poor brands when major paradigm shifts have taken place. Some notable ones are:

Records – Eight Track Tapes – Cassette Tapes – CDs – iPod – ?

Network TV – Cable TV – Satellite TV – On-Demand TV – ?

Other smaller innovations that have left some brands asleep at the wheel:

- Levi's – didn't stay relevant to consumers and lost its dominant position in the marketplace (thanks to Dockers it's still around)
- GM – no brand differentiation to separate Chevy, Pontiac, Buick, etc.

Perception is Reality

I hear time and time again executives say, "That's not reality" and I continue to respond that if the consumer perceives you in that manner then that is "reality" to them, no matter what you attempted to say or communicate. Remember, the consumer owns your brand in his/her mind...not in reality! You must manage your image and not leave it for interpretation or chance – it's your future at stake. You can control the message and customer experience.

Books to consider:

- *Winning* by Jack Welch
- *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman

Magazines to Read:

- *Fast Company*
- *Fortune*
- *Business Week*



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Vince Lombardi – “Gentlemen, this is a Football”

You are probably shaking your head at this point wondering what Vince Lombardi and his famous quote have to do with branding. Well, it all starts with the most basic fundamentals from which to build your brand. In business it starts with a solid understanding and execution of your “Brand Identity.”

Once again you might be shaking your head. Brand identity is still consistently being misunderstood and executed. The best example is one of our local hospitals here in the Gallatin Valley – Bozeman Deaconess. The way they present their brand in the local media is dysfunctional. They lack consistency in every format and vehicle by not following some very basic rules of branding. They.....

- Lack consistency in brand - logo delivery
- Have a different look and feel for every ad or print execution
- Use different typefaces/styles for each execution
- Lack consistency in tone and manner among each ad
- Develop ads and not campaigns which reduces the overall impact and effectiveness of their advertising and budget dollars

It might be a good thing in light of the increased competition by the market leaders in the likes of Billings Clinic, St. Vincent’s Hospital and several others that our local health care provider is now entering the real estate development market. Does anyone at Bozeman Deaconess have a clue that great brands understand their core competencies and focus on being the best in the category in which they are competing?

Good luck Bozeman Deaconess—you will need it!
How about a new name—Bozeman Deaconess Real Estate Co.?