

Why do we need branding?

Branding makes you, you. It separates you from the crowd and makes you stand out. It defines the uniqueness of your services and products. It informs people who you are, quickly. It is how you are perceived by others.

For these reasons you need to protect your identity and work to make it strong. To protect your identity you need to make sure you are consistent in what you produce, in how you use the logo and how you talk about the company as a whole. To make it strong you need to make sure you have a unified look and feel, and are sending out a unified message, whether it is in an email, a memo, a phone call, a client visit or an event.

Branding is huge; because it is more than a logo or materials, because it encompasses so many areas and touches so many parts.

- How do you tackle it?
- What do you / can you do to make it work?
- What are the pieces?
- How do you get the employees to own it?
- What is the value to them?
- What is the value to the bottom line?
- Is our brand/culture in line with our mission/vision?

Branding isn't just a logo and some color. It is a feeling a person gets when they work with a company not just from one individual in the company but the company as a whole. It is the reason they come back. If they get quality but no service why would they want to return? If they get great service but bad quality, again, why would they return? A brand permeates the company it is what everyone in the company believes and strives for. It is what makes the company work. It is not static but a changing entity. It has a core that is solid a foundation which doesn't change but how it is approached does.

Companies throw around a lot of words that they want to be reflected in the company; respect, trust, quality, transparency, responsibility, knowledge, experience, insight. These are great ideals but where do they get you? Not far. There is a need to have a vision, a goal that you are striving for. A destination. Once you have a destination you can use these ideals to reach it to work together and get there. What is your company's goal? In one year? Five years? Ten years? What is or reason for being beyond making money? What are our core values? What are our aspirations?

Branding isn't something that the marketing department should own alone. It is something the company owns. Each department has to have a say in what the culture is like as each department has its own sub culture.

Branding isn't something just done outside of the company. It is an internal process too. The internal branding is even more important than the external as your employees have to buy into the branding to make it work. They have to know how it will benefit them. Branding helps them become unified and inspired by a common sense of purpose and identity. It brings them together, aims them at a common goal

and helps them to identify with each other, to find a common ground where none may exist. Every associate is key in building a brand image through their verbal and written communications, execution of business processes or business development efforts.

Employees are the organization. They are the ambassadors of the company as they meet and interact with colleagues, customers, suppliers, competitors and industry experts. As well as interacting with an impressive number of people totally disconnected to the corporation in the form of family members, friends, former colleagues and many others.

Your brand is your culture. Your culture is your brand.

The benefits of a strong brand and culture are:

- Happier employees
- Lower turnover
- Better customer service
- More production
- Better results

Each of these things can be measured but they take time to build.

Ultimately the cornerstone to a strong brand is consistency.

- Graphics Standards
- Written and Oral Communication Standards
- Business Cards & Stationary Standards
- Endorsement of Image Attributes
- Strong, Simple and Consistent Messages
- Internal Branding

Today, brand building no longer constitutes a mere manipulation of the consumer's perceptions and desires, but it is a creation of a system that on the one-hand makes promises and arouses anticipations, while on the other-hand it delivers and realizes the promises that it makes.

– Dan Herman, PhD, owner and CEO of Herman – Strategic Consultants