

HOW TO DEVELOP A STRONG BRAND FOR YOUR PRODUCT

BC Ministry of Agriculture Marketing Guide Series



A Brand is More Than a Logo

WHAT IS A BRAND?

Brands are living entities that are developed by companies over time. They are not made instantaneously and are much more than simply a logo or colour scheme. Your brand is a promise you make to your consumers that strengthens their loyalty so that they will continue to choose your product over others.

The emotional connection consumers have with your product is often what keeps them coming back. Your brand's job is to continually build that connection between your company and your target market. The tangible elements of a brand include:

1. Name (e.g. Kellogg's Rice Krispies);
2. Logo, symbol, trademark (e.g. McDonald's Golden Arches);
3. Key colours or colour combinations (e.g. Ziploc blue);
4. Fonts (e.g. Lindt);
5. Packaging shape (e.g. Coca-Cola bottle);
6. Tag lines (e.g. Cadbury's "feel the joy");
7. New vocabulary (e.g. Tim Horton's Double Double);
8. Distinct smell (e.g. Subway); and
9. Memorable jingle (e.g. Meow Mix).

The intangible elements of your brand are how your target market feels when they are engaging with your brand and how they explain your brand to their friends.

Tip Knowing what you want people to say about you is fundamental to building a strong brand.

WHY YOU NEED A STRONG BRAND

Building a strong brand results in brand equity and a higher market value for your company. A good brand:

1. **Builds recognition of your brand by the target market:** Your product is easily recognizable increasing the likelihood that the consumer will purchase it over the competition.
2. **Results in customer loyalty:** Retaining customers is easier and less costly than going after new ones. Loyal customers will also become brand advocates through word-of-mouth or social media.
3. **Provides easier new product introductions:** Existing customers are more likely to try new products if they like your brand.
4. **Allows for higher pricing:** Delivering on your brand promise can capture higher prices.



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**Strong Brand =
Competitive Advantage**

4 STEPS TO BUILDING A STRONG BRAND

A strong brand is recognizable and has value and character in the eyes of its loyal consumers. The key steps in building that brand are:

- Knowing your loyal target market;
- Developing your brand promise based on what sets you apart;
- Building your story that resonates with buyers and consumers; and
- Communicating the brand consistently.

Target markets are the consumers most likely to purchase your product.

STEP 1: KNOW YOUR LOYAL TARGET MARKET

Developing a brand that resonates with consumers begins with research. Whether you are developing a new brand or think it is time to rebrand, it starts with a strong understanding of your target market, particularly your loyal consumers, the benefits of the product they value and the competition.

Knowing your audience provides direction, tone and reach while you are building the human connection.

For example, Tim Horton's and Starbucks have strong customer followings. They both started small but leveraged their knowledge of their loyal customers. Tim Horton's caters to the 'every day person' who values the company's authenticity, demonstrated through its strong roots in the communities it serves, and product lines that are value-priced. Starbucks caters to people wanting an 'experience' with higher end beverages as well as comfortable and convenient gathering places.

STEP 2: DEVELOP YOUR BRAND PROMISE

A brand promise is the foundation of your brand. It is what makes your company unique and what sets you apart from the competition. It encompasses all of the physical benefits consumers can expect and also conveys the emotional message. You need to be able to describe what you do, who you do it for and why you do it better than anyone else. That is your promise.

Once developed, you must be prepared to deliver on that promise each and every time. Consumers want to be assured of receiving the same benefit each time they purchase your brand. Consistency makes your brand credible. Today's consumers are concerned about many issues such as food safety, farming methods, sustainability and product or ingredient origin. Any product recalls, poor ingredients or misleading claims can negatively impact your brand. In other words, stand behind your promise!



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Consistency Builds Credibility

STEP 3: BUILD YOUR STORY

The ability of your brand to tell the right story to the right people can be the difference between getting your product in the shopping cart or not. When you have a strong brand built on company values, a clear vision of where your company is heading and what you need to do to get there, telling your story becomes much easier.

Knowing what your brand truly is will give you the gift of clarity. Your 'sales pitch' will come easily as you will be able to tell your potential customers and employees why they should try your product or join your team. Your company culture will be built around your brand and soon everyone will be telling the same story and delivering on the same promise. Remember that the brand is communicated by everyone on your team.

For example, Manitoba Harvest is the leading global producer and manufacturer of hemp and hemp food products promising "quality from seed to shelf". The company's story is based on its co-founder's story of a personal transformation based on healthy eating. The story is a commitment to healthy people and planet through policies directed at quality and sustainability.

STEP 4: COMMUNICATE THE BRAND

Widespread brand recognition takes time to achieve. Strong brands are not built overnight. They take planning and require on-going strategic and tactical marketing activities. When you are able to effectively communicate your brand, you are connecting with your target audience.

Brand buy-in = customer loyalty = repeat purchases

Find out where your consumers are 'hanging out' and communicate your brand message in their medium of choice, not yours. You may prefer Facebook but if your audience is active on Twitter that is where you need to be. Your customer will want to associate with brand attributes, value and personality they can relate to and the personality of your brand on Twitter will be different than on Facebook.

A strong brand is also able to stand the test of time. Stay on top of consumer trends and be prepared to make adjustments to your strategy. If your target audience starts hanging out somewhere new or if consumer trends start to shift, your brand will have to adapt if it wants to continue to grow. Your brand promise doesn't have to change, but how you deliver it might.

Some of the ways you can communicate your brand are:

- Traditional advertising, public relations and promotions both on and offline;
- 'Word-of-mouth', encouraging your loyal customers to share their enthusiasm for your brand with their friends and colleagues; and
- Co-branding, where your product is linked/sold with another brand, is another method to expand the circulation of your brand. If you choose this technique, be sure that the other brand complements your product (e.g. GoPro and Red Bull) and has at least equal brand value.

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Always Deliver on Your Brand Promise

Remember that communicating the message must be done inside the company as well. All communication tools from business cards, stationery and signature lines on emails must be consistent and in line with the brand (colour, logo, name).

Internal communication of your brand also includes building a culture within the company that is customer focused and committed to the brand promise. If for example a component of your brand focuses on sustainability and the environment, then policies must be put in place that reduce the company's footprint (e.g. using recyclable packaging; supporting employees taking public transport; supporting associations or local groups caring for the environment).



KEEP YOUR BRAND PROMISE

Once you have developed a strong brand, consumers will have expectations of your brand. These expectations are based on your brand promise and you will be expected to deliver on them every time.

When building a brand:

- Think long term: Brands are not built overnight so it is important to focus on the longer term;
- Remain open to change: Markets change and new opportunities arise. Stay open to modifications to help you achieve your goals;
- Keep it specific and achievable: Measure; learn; adjust; repeat; and
- Follow your marketing plan.

When you clearly understand your brand and the value it provides, you are able to speak passionately about your business. A strong brand attracts consumers and employees, engages them, and builds strong, enduring relationships.



MORE INFORMATION

See the Ministry of Agriculture's Marketing Guide Series for more information and additional topics by visiting <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/statistics/market-analysis-and-trade-statistics>

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