

# Marketing Link

Ideas to grow on. A Bells International Publication Vol 2. No. 2

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## Brand X to Brand Excellence

### When it comes to your company's image, it's all in their head

#### Hey America, show us your brand.

Do you know where to find it? Can you identify it right away? And if we asked your employees, customers and prospects to show us, we'd all be looking at the same picture, right?

The truth is, we wouldn't be looking at a picture at all. Branding is more than who you are, it's what people think about who you are. More to the point, it's what people feel about who you are. Branding is the totality of your company's image value—your products, your services, your people, your logo, the kinds of advertising you use, the messages you send, your positioning in the marketplace and the culture that drives your business.

But most of all, your brand is your promise. It's what you've told the world to expect when they choose to do business with you.

#### Branding on the Brain

While a brand isn't a picture, there's no denying that it is an image—and a powerful one. "Think of yourself as a Texas rancher rounding up a herd of consumers and figuratively burning your

identity into their gray matter," says Gayle Sheehan, who heads up the marketing division of Bells International. "What does that identity look like? It should be unique enough to distinguish your brand from all the other mental brands out there and creative enough to maintain that 'top of the mind' position every company craves."

Most importantly, she said, it should be an enticing promise of performance. Remember, that promise will, in large part, determine how an individual feels about your company. Part of that is perception; part of it comes from brand experience—whether a person has had positive or negative encounters with your brand.

#### Imagining the Image

Everyone has a personality. It can be competent, friendly, sloppy, boring, detached, exciting, reserved—but there it is, good or bad. Your company has a personality, too. And before you've had a single encounter with a prospective customer, your brand vision lets you display the personality you want the world to see.

"Before you can build brand equity, you need to know your target market and have a clear understanding of who you are and the image you want to project," says Sheehan.

While you may be ready to revamp your logo, brochure or website, you should first identify and evaluate the qualities that set you apart. And don't fall for the familiar "we offer the best service" pitfall, because every business believes and promotes that. Look inward to find that personality trait that will make you memorable, but also look outward to see what the rest of the world is saying about you and your competition.

Remember, marketing does only part of the job. If you also have exceptional people coupled with the right product, service and delivery, you can create a psychological presence that tells the marketplace you're someone worth getting to know. So before you show us your brand, make sure it's something worth showing off.

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# P is for Profits

## Follow the Six P's of Branding for Better ROI



### Product

What are you selling? Whether it's merchandise, a service or your expertise, the product is the end game, the entity that you supply to your customers and the ultimate purpose of branding.

### Promise

This is branding in its most basic form—the pledge you make to your customers about who you are and what you can do for them. When customers see your logo, hear your slogan or see your product, their mind should focus on your brand promise.



### Positioning

The critical factor here isn't where you are in the marketplace—it's where you want to be. Positioning lets you set the terms for your brand. With your advertising, design elements, distribution and online presence, you can depict your brand as fun or sophisticated, upscale or economical, power-driven or eco-friendly or just about anywhere in-between.



### Personality

Tear away the trappings of marketing and you're left with a feeling. That intangible element is the personality of your brand. What is the gut-level response that consumers have to your logo, your advertising or the mention of your brand name? Is it likable? Respected? Avoided? Remember, if you don't like your brand personality (and your customers don't either), you CAN change it.



### Packaging

How your product is shipped, mailed or presented says a lot about your brand. A classic black box can indicate high-end contents, while bright colors appeal to kids. In a larger sense, tamper-proof packaging can show a commitment to the safety of your consumers, and protective packing materials indicate the high-value you place on the contents.

### People

Every person in your organization—from the receptionist to the dock worker to the CEO—is a reflection of your brand. Each member of the team should be well-schooled on your messaging and present themselves in a manner that reinforces the brand (coming across as friendly, professional, organized, etc.) A good example is the Ritz-Carlton where each employee is taught to smile, show poise and memorize certain phrases that can be used when interacting with customers.



# the art of attitude

At the end of the day, we all want to hang with the cool kids.



For some, saving the rain forest, stopping global hunger and being part of a hyper-conscious, global-centric vibe seems like a "Tall" order. For others, it seems more like a "Grande."

No matter what size you like your Starbucks coffee, chances are you're ordering more than just a cup o' Joe. Starbucks has been able to move past the traditional branding of products and into the cerebral world of attitude branding.

Its image is closely tied to social, environmental and cultural causes, so you feel like you're helping mankind with every sip. Or, in the case of ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's, with every scoop.

Nike is one of the founding members of the attitude club, establishing a brand where the focus is not on footwear but the lofty pursuit of personal achievement. Whole Foods

sells great produce, but they also sell green living and a healthy, eco-friendly lifestyle. Today, healthy is cool. And at the end of the day, we all want to hang with the cool kids.

"Corporations have personalities and, at a certain level, we're buying a little of that personality along with the product or service," says Diana Hyland, who oversees marketing development at Bells. "Our goal as marketers is to create a look, image and language that reflects your brand's personality."

Presently, one of the coolest of the attitude branders is Lucky brand jeans. Lucky women pay premium prices for the trendy, limited-outlet jeans. While handsomely styled, the most well-made part of these garments might be the brand-buzz that's driving demand—and denim—to new heights.

# Extreme Makeover: Image Edition

Times change. Smart companies change, too. Let's face it, even classic brands age. Fortunately, there are strategies for repositioning your company and revitalizing your image. Here are some ideas:

- Give your product "new" life by highlighting attributes that previously had not been the focus of your marketing efforts.
- Change, re-design or improve your product offerings.
- Offer new varieties or options (flavors, colors, design, etc.)
- Re-design your packaging, logo and sales materials.
- Develop a new slogan or tagline.

- Change your pricing structure.
- Explore new advertising media to reach a previously untapped market.
- Change your messaging and highlight the "new" elements of your brand.

While some companies have well-established in-house marketing departments, many find that they don't have the time, experience or expertise to do it all. A fully-integrated marketing approach can help breathe new life into a stagnant brand, boost awareness and map out a plan that puts your ideas into action.



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## Have you checked your brand lately?

It all starts with a strategy that works from the inside out. If you're looking to reposition your organization and reach new audiences, you need to re-evaluate the market and find innovative solutions to drive sales forward.

The first step begins by asking yourself these basic questions:

1. What is unique about your service or product?
2. Do your employees, suppliers, distributors and clients know and understand what sets you apart?
3. Do you deliver on that promise?
4. Are you communicating effectively and often?
5. Is anyone listening? Does anyone care? Are the phones ringing?

The answers are neither basic nor simple, but often form the groundwork in determining an appropriate branding and advertising program for your stage of development—whether you're just starting out or well on your way.

## LINK'S Top 10 Countdown

A 2006 Harris Poll asked respondents to identify overall "Best Brands." The results:

1. Sony (again!)
2. Dell
3. Coca-Cola
4. Toyota
5. Ford
6. Honda
7. Hewlett Packard
8. General Electric
9. Kraft Foods
10. Apple

# Pointing and Clicking and Branding—Oh My! From a marketing standpoint, the mouse has roared.



In an age where opinions are formed with the click of a mouse, it's vital to take control of the online conversation and make a great first impression—even before it happens. Often, that means using the Internet as a branding vehicle.

"It is abundantly clear that marketers are seeing a compelling opportunity to leverage the Internet as a powerful medium that drives both branding and sales results," explains Peter Petrusky, director of advisory services for PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The online universe reaches potential customers in ways previously unimaginable: downloadable podcasts, video feeds, interactive webinars, multi-channel email campaigns and emerging technologies. All provide exciting new possibilities.

**Your customers are online browsing—make sure they find what they need.**

### Company Web Site

For a vast number of consumers, this is stop number one before making a purchase. You control the message, so take the time to make the message strong, clear and memorable. Create the right look for your target and build a site that's organized and easy to navigate.

With the right tools in place, online marketing can help you develop leads, drive sales and provide a detailed picture of where visitors go and how long they stay. Using backend analytics, you can even customize sites based on your viewer's interests.

### Online Corporate Store

For companies large and small, selling on the internet makes sense—provided it reinforces brand attributes like speed, organization

and product positioning.

In addition, many companies use an online store to distribute logo-enhanced merchandise to their employees, sales reps or customers.

### Online Advertising

With high-speed connections and changing technologies, businesses have an abundance of online advertising capabilities. While pop-ups are widely despised, the new generation of banner ads, pay-per-click and word search programs are effective tools for driving viewers and sales to your website.

### E-mail

Direct marketing has a very good friend in e-mail. It offers a personal, 1-to-1 connection and touch-point precision. E-mail reaches out to one person or to thousands, so it's a powerful tool for building brand awareness—as long as your customers find your personal appeal "appealing."

While SPAM remains a four-letter word, e-mail messages can be effective when the content is useful, such as a link to an online newsletter or information about special events, a contest or discount. To ensure opt-in participation, have a sign-up box on your website, at events, in your brochure or annual report.

### Executive Blog

The executive blog, now all the rage, allows a CEO or corporate executive to have a direct, online channel to consumers linking their personality to the company's image. To make this medium relevant, the blog must stay current—so make sure your CEO can make the commitment long term.



# How to Avoid Having a Secret Identity

A secret identity may work for Superman, but not for the rest of us. If you want to be a super company, you need your brand to shine like the Bat-signal on a dark, Gotham night. Building a super image means using the right equipment to create your corporate persona. It starts with your logo, which in the hero world is the symbol emblazoned on your leotard. Thus, your logo should embody the colors, fonts and imagery that best reflect your true identity. But a logo alone can't do it all.

## Your Identity Toolkit

- Logo
- Company Letterhead
- Business Cards
- Signage
- Trade Show Promotions
- Office Decor
- Point-of-Purchase Displays
- Brochures
- Annual Reports
- Corporate Apparel or Uniforms
- Billboards and Outdoor Ads
- Newspaper, Newsletter and Magazine Advertising
- Radio and TV Commercials
- Web Site, Blogs, Podcasts and Online Advertising
- Logo Merchandise

Working on a re-branding effort? Make sure what you say is what you do. For example, don't say you're Superman if you can't fly. Before you get started, measure what you can afford to measure and query your staff, clients and prospects about their emotional response to your brand elements. You don't need super powers to get inside the mind of your audience, but you will need to ask the right questions.

# Bells International, Inc.

Bells has been helping businesses build brand awareness for the past fifty years—and counting. Call us for a cost-free consultation.

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<b>Marketing Link</b> Publisher: Gayle Sheehan Editor: Diana Hyland Writer: Ron Bates Art Director: Josh Cornett	© 2006 Bells International, Inc., 109 Denson Drive, Austin, Texas 78752 Marketing Link is written, produced and designed by Bells International. All materials are original and cannot be reproduced without prior written permission. For questions or to update your address, contact Diana Hyland, dhyland@bellsintl.com
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# Inc. BLOTTER

The term "branding" goes back to the 19th century when companies like Quaker Oats and Campbell's Soup would literally "brand" the barrels their products were shipped in so that they could be identified by shoppers.

**What's in a name?** From a branding standpoint, plenty. Just ask Richard Knerr and Arthur "Spud" Merlin, founders of the toy company **Wham-O**. In the **1950s**, they marketed the "Hula Hoop" but couldn't patent the idea because people had been spinning in hoops for as long as there had been hoops to spin in. They did, however, trademark the "Hula Hoop" brand, a name so catchy **kids rejected hoops with any other label**. And that's how Wham-O turned an ordinary, plastic ring into **the most profitable fad of a generation**.

The sprawling **XIT Ranch** once touched ten counties in the Texas Panhandle and West Texas. It's widely believed that the "X" in their cattle brand represents the Roman numeral "10" and that the brand stands for "Ten In Texas." It doesn't. It's just a **design** that was **difficult for rustlers** to alter.

Sometimes branding is about being in **the right place at the right time**. In the late **1970s**, **M&M/Mars** was given the opportunity to use its M&Ms candies in a **sci-fi movie**. They passed. The movie was "**E.T.**" which went on to be the biggest box office draw of its time. And the candy that lured the lovable **alien**? Hershey's **Reese's Pieces**. It also lured a lot of customers, with **sales tripling within one week** of the premier.

It's hard to imagine that in the **1970s**, motorcycle legend **Harley-Davidson** was mockingly referred to as "**Hardly-Ableson**." The company was **sold in 1981** and the new owners **re-emphasized quality manufacturing** while promoting the **classic** Harley brand. The company **regained** its **dominance** and today licensing of its logo accounts for more than five percent of its revenues.

**Mossimo**, the darling of the sportswear rack in the **1980s**, saw **sales plummet** in the **1990s**. The company **reinvented** itself for the new millennium promoting its **youth-oriented** line with a **lower price point** and recently signed a **billion-dollar**, exclusive licensing agreement with **Target**.



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