

Abonar Newsletter



5 STEPS TO ESTABLISH A BRAND

STEP 1. IDENTIFICATION OF VISION, POSITION, AND CORE COMPETENCIES

A brand cannot be created until everyone understands the company's vision and core competencies.

STEP 2. INTERNAL/EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Internal and external communications must be evaluated to understand what message is being conveyed.

STEP 3. COMPETITIVE ASSESSMENT

Competitor's brands must be analyzed to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

STEP 4. BRAND STRATEGY PLANNING

The strategy must be aligned with core competencies.

STEP 5. BRAND IMPLEMENTATION & SUSTAINABILITY

Planning isn't enough. Implementation is crucial.

Marketing

Building Strong Sustainable Brands. Is It Possible?

In a world of increasing global competition the importance of recognition is more important than ever before. Products and services are becoming indistinguishable and differentiation is a key to success. A strong brand can provide such differentiation. It provokes awareness and recognition of a product, service, or company and is the promise and expectation that is inherent in every consumer's mind. The best brands have meaning and values. They have their own identity complete with visions, goals, and specific strategies. Companies such as Nike have developed such strong brands that they are recognized by simple symbols. A strong brand will stand out in a crowded marketplace and lay the foundation for success. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate brands and capture the minds of consumers. How can you build a strong brand among thousands of competitors? Fortunately, there is an answer to this question. There is a methodology to create, develop, and maintain strong brands. This can be done in five steps: Identification of vision, position, and core competencies, Internal/External Assessment, Competitive Assessment, Strategy Planning, and Implementation & Sustainability

Step 1. Identification of vision, position, and core competencies

In order to develop a successful sustainable brand, an organization must

build its brand around its vision, position and core competencies. More often than not, organizations build their brand around what they regard as important, which is not necessarily what they're good at, and do not focus on their vision and core strengths. Therefore, it is pertinent that the first step, in developing a brand strategy, is to clearly identify the vision, position, and core competencies of the organization. This commonly involves focus groups with key stakeholders of the organization. This seems like a fairly simple step, however, key findings are generally discovered during this phase of brand development. Stakeholders are often surprised to find vast differences in what individuals perceive as strengths of the organization and inconsistencies in goals and objectives of the business. This serves as a very practical and beneficial exercise as it builds a foundation for the organization and paves the way for planning, developing, and implementing a valuable sustainable brand.

Step 2. Internal/External Assessment

Previously, we identified the vision, position, and core competencies of the organization. Now we analyze the brand itself and what a strong brand means to all stakeholders. What message should the brand convey? How should it look, sound, feel? What is its perception/image to users and non-users? What are the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the current brand? What is the current



“ A STRONG BRAND WILL STAND OUT IN A CROWDED MARKETPLACE AND LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS.”

brand strategy? What should be the future strategy?

Internal Assessment (Dimension 1):

The first dimension evaluates internal stakeholder views and perceptions. Generally, it is best to set-up focus groups and work closely with internal stakeholders to identify strengths and weaknesses of the brand. Individuals are probed to assess actual and perceived perceptions of the brand.

Touch-points including websites & blogs, news releases, brochures, annual reports, presentations, announcements, signage, mail, advertising, and product directions are reviewed and evaluated. It is essential to assess the clarity, accuracy, emphasis, style, tone, and voice of these communication methods. Brands should send clear, unified, and consistent messages.

External Assessment (Dimension 2):

The second dimension evaluates outside user/non-user perceptions.

Outside perceptions will give you an in-depth look at weaknesses and strengths from the consumer level point of view. Current, previous and prospective customers are generally surveyed to assess perceptions of the brand, and reasons for choosing the product/service.

It is important to assess the customer experience to gain insight on the consistency/inconsistency of the brand identity. To assess the customer experience, every customer contact point is commonly evaluated. This includes the moment the customer inquires about a product/service to the moment of purchase and the post-purchase attitude towards the brand.

The brand assessment from the two dimensions derives the brand usefulness. By taking all stakeholder views into consideration, one can determine what overall strengths to focus on and how to better align the brand to these strengths and opportunities.

Step 3. Competitive Assessment

You always have to be aware of your competition. Specifically, it's important to determine what differentiates you from your competitors. This is done by evaluating differential points which enables you to identify opportunity spaces and strengths/weaknesses relative to the competition. Benchmarking is an excellent process used by organizations to employ new methods and ideas to enhance performance. Branding efforts of competing firms are also generally evaluated.

Step 4. Brand Strategy Planning

At this stage, enough information has been collected to knowledgeably create a strategic plan. Generally, the consultant conducts focus groups with key stakeholders to design the final brand strategy and ensure that it is built around the vision, position, and core competencies of the firm. This is where the expertise of the branding consultant really comes to play. A knowledgeable consultant facilitates the brand



development process by asking the right questions, providing key input and ideas, getting key issues to surface, and achieving resolution.

Step 5. Brand Implementation & Sustainability

Great plans do not always result in successful business practices. Organizations often allocate extensive time and resources to develop a brand strategy but do not focus enough energy towards the implementation portion of the plan. In order to execute a strategy successfully, there must be measures in place to ensure compliance and implementation of the strategy. The Balanced Scorecard is an excellent tool that promotes execution of a strategy as it records and measures results. In order to pursue and reach goals, individuals need targets that can be measured and recorded; the balanced scorecard can customize measures specific to various projects. Furthermore, the balanced scorecard facilitates long-term sustainability of the brand. Targets that are not being met will be focused on and improved. The Balanced Scorecard also provides the flexibility to change measures as business factors change in the future.

The Aftermath

Development of a strong brand strategy will bring you noticeable results. A brand is something that can be seen, touched, and heard. It is something that will resonate with customers and all internal stakeholders of the company. Increased revenues, retention of customers and a stronger company image are a few of the benefits of a strong brand identity.

Who develops a Brand Strategy?

Developing and maintaining a brand strategy usually requires a team effort; no individual can do it on their own. Large firms generally bring in brand consultants, strategic marketing firms, or independent authorities. It often takes someone with a different perspective, generally someone outside the company, to help build and maintain a strong brand. Abonar can help you design a successful brand strategy. Get ahead of your competition by making a smart investment in your brand.



We offer innovative and customized solutions to enhance organizational and business performance. We work together with our clients to turn ideas into successful business practices.

Sean McAlpine
(306) 291-3241
sean.mcalpine@abonarconsultants.com

Nav Khinda
(780) 862-0282
nav.khinda@abonarconsultants.com

Scott Kopelchuk
(306) 290-2174
scott.kopelchuk@abonarconsultants.com

Mailing Address

3110 8th St. E. Unit 8B-376
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7H 0W2