



Today the benefits of a strong brand are well documented. Powerful brands play a critical role in an organization's performance within competitive environments. They also provide the means to demand higher margins, assist in capturing greater market share and influence the perceptions and opinions of internal and external audiences. Many, however, do not understand the importance of corporate and product image and identity as it relates to the effectiveness of the brand and its ability to command a price premium. But a well-designed corporate identity and image program will positively impact an organization's financial performance. Image and identity put a recognizable face on the brand.

To enhance the value of an organization's brand, companies must be willing to complete their investment by establishing an identity and image that reflects the characteristics of the brand. This can be accomplished through effective design strategies. Identity is the vehicle that communicates the brand attributes and also the messages of an organization. In order to fulfill the entire brand promise, a brand must be visually strong, memorable and aligned with the product characteristics. When that happens, customers are willing to pay more for the products with which they feel comfortable.

Any brand is the sum of four key components, both tangible and intangible. They are:

- Reputation capital
- Corporate values & behavior
- Product & processes
- Image and identity

Within these elements, an organization will find its brand meaning, brand awareness, brand identity and its image. The sum of these creates the brand equity, or what the brand is worth. Powerful brands must contain and have aligned each of these four components. It is, however, the function of image and identity to put a look to the brand and distinguish the products from the competition.

The difference between market success and failure can often be summed up in one word: identity. Companies who are runaway successes in their category get there because they have created a strong, consistent and identifiable graphic personality that helps customers relate to the organization and/or their products. They are distinctively positioned and have developed relationships of trust. The graphic identities of these companies and their products act as a guarantee of authenticity and quality that can translate into increased sales and profits.



Identity plays a big role in the real world of branding. For example, Minute Maid re-designed their signature black orange juice carton because competitors duplicated its features resulting in the dilution of the brand. When the package was re-designed sales increased 24%. This is a direct result of the ongoing role of design in communicating the attributes of the brand and maintaining a point of distinction. Remove the strong and distinctive identity from the brand and the value dramatically decreases.

Design is the vehicle that creates strong image and identity programs. Brands are assets. They have value and must be viewed as an investment. Many companies do a wonderful job of creating a product, establishing values and reputation and then unfortunately settle for a mediocre image and identity. These organizations have invested in components like research and development, on-time delivery, employee training and customer service initiatives, but to the public they look anything but dynamic.

An exceptional image and identity program connects the company, its product and core values to the reputation established with its audience. Image and identity puts life into the brand. It animates and ultimately communicates the essence of the brand. Most importantly, design will help define the experience of the customer and keep products from becoming a commodity.

Significant Sources:

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