

SETTING YOUR **BRAND** IN MOTION



BRAND DEVELOPMENT & BRANDING— STRANGE BEDFELLOWS OR THE ODD COUPLE?

In just about every article I write, I point out the difference between brand development and branding. But I thought it was time to really clear the air on the subject.

Without getting too academic, I generally define branding as being the constant and consistent use of color, graphics, type and spokespeople. In other words, branding is making sure the logo is always in the lower right hand corner, the typeface is always Helvetica, correct corporate colors are used, the photo takes up 3/4 of the ad size, and that the spokesperson is always wearing the same outfit (remember Jonathon Pryce in the Infinity commercials a few years back?)

Brand development on the other hand, is the discovery of a brand's distinction and the development of a communication of that distinction. Both branding and brand development are mutually exclusive functions—branding being tactical and brand development more strategic. But both are essential in professional communications. Let me explain why. I'll start by stating something I've said in seminars, speeches, workshops, on trains, over dinner, and in writing many times—The definition of a brand is, "A claim of distinction." Without distinction, your brand is indistinct or generic, or the worst case scenario, a commodity. And without a point of distinction in our advertising, the message will more than likely be about features and benefits. When this occurs, we're competing with other product's features and benefits, not with other brands. And that is a real no-no.

Now let me try and connect the dots. A formal brand discovery process will uncover a brand's true distinction, or what we call a "brand franchise"—those unique selling points that no other brand in the category has. After that discovery, the next step would be to create a communication of that differentiation. Many times the outcome is a positioning line like, "We'll leave the light on for you." Other times it's an icon like, "Intel Inside" or sometimes a character like the Maytag Repairman. They all serve as immutable reminders of the brand's uniqueness. And now the stage is set for branding. In the case of Motel 6, Tom Bodett was cast to deliver a constant and consistent message of "A clean comfortable room at the lowest price of any national chain."—A terrific example of branding and brand development working hand-in-hand.

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There are so many wonderful examples of brand development and branding done right it's hard to

site the best examples. At the same time there are even more examples of it being done totally wrong. Here's a great one done right:

Several years ago, Sprint was the first to connect its customers to a network of fiber optics that offered much more voice clarity. And so the now famous "Pin Drop" was created to communicate that distinction. In other words, they decided that what separated Sprint from all other competitors was this voice clarity.

Then they went to market communicating that Sprint products offered more clarity as illustrated by the pin dropping in every commercial. Today, the Sprint PCS brand distinction is still obvious. All of the commercials feature Brian Baker in his trademark black trench coat suggesting that all the other cell phones have static and that Sprint PCS will clear up their users' conversations. So the brand development work in this case was the discovery of the benefits of fiber optic clarity and the concept of the pin drop. The branding was the constant and continuous application of Mr. Baker saving the day and the pin dropping to illustrate the point of the clarity.

A point I'd like to make here is that branding is only art direction until the brand's claim of distinction is established. Now you're asking, what is the brand discovery procedure? I'll share ours.

We call our brand process Turning the Telescope™. The concept is that many advertisers look out at their audience to discover their wants and needs. Then they develop their brand around meeting them. And that's fine, we do need to know our customers' wants and needs. But don't forget, all of your competitors are doing exactly the same thing. They are going to the same audience, asking the same questions and getting exactly the same response. Then, developing their brands around those same wants and needs.

What's the outcome? A blur. And that very same prospect saying, "All brands are alike, I'll take the lowest price." We say, turn the telescope back on the company, find out what is truly unique and valuable about it and then go to market advertising that brand distinction while meeting the market's wants and needs.

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Turning the Telescope is a minimum half-day session at our office or other off-site location. We recruit attendees from marketing, brand managers, sales, operations, field personnel and the president or CEO. The Process starts with listing facts by examining your company, its history, origins of business, markets served, the founders, traditions, legacies, innovations, values, ethics, customers, the people, and culture. In this first stage we uncover literally hundreds of facts.

Through a series of three other stages, we eliminate the non-unique characteristics, extrapolate potential truths, and finally, distill the remaining information until we have a prioritized list of three to five absolutely unique and deliverable selling points about your company. From this, we can establish the foundation for a proprietary brand franchise and unique branding concept.

So, strange bedfellows or the odd couple? Maybe both. But together, it's the relationship that makes brands successful.