

METHODOLOGY • CHAPTER 1



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A brand evokes an emotional response in its target audience and beyond, either of trust, love or even indifference; however, it is more important that a brand enables this audience to have an expectation of the experience offered. Consumer experience has emerged as a field that embraces this concept, but how does a brand get infused into a customer experience? And does the experience stop at just external customers? What about the internal customer?

Brand historically has been defined as, “the intangible sum of a product's attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it's advertised.” (David Ogilvy, http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/0,,sid9_gci211703,00.html).

This more traditional, advertising focused definition of brand includes price and reputation as part of the branding experience. A price for a product or service is usually a result of decisions made in a workflow process – materials used during manufacturing or development, the design of the process and level of quality control processes, and decisions by product marketing to determine what will attract the audience, just to name a few key decisions. Often the decisions made during such processes are based on a set of values. The decisions can be based on the values of a manager or a division, but ideally the values would be company values, or more specifically brand values. In some ways, Ogilvy saw long ago how brands should influence internal company operations, decisions, and how those factors influence brand perception.



Sometimes organizations subconsciously define a brand to be a logo, color palette, and key phrases when actually these materials represent only the graphic and verbal manifestation of the brand. But with the rise of the Internet and Web-based solutions (internal and external), merely incorporating the right colors and words on a page does not make a solution “on brand.” The Internet and Web-based solutions have allowed organizations to become more transparent to their customers – a customer can more fully participate in the sales and marketing processes for developing their own solutions and products. Before the Web, transactions in a company happened “behind the curtain” and interactions with a company only happened with a sales person, a customer service representative, or through an ad. The brand was essentially the face of the company. Through time and the introduction of new technology, the internal workings of a company have become just as important as the external perception because it is now what a customer sees. Integrated marketing solutions were a step towards defining a company’s brand – ensuring that the logo, palette, and copy was coordinated across all company published materials. However, companies need to take that even further internally and express their brand through every channel internally and externally.

The Web was a key factor in changing business practice and process so now a Web site complements the efforts of the salesperson (and in some cases replaces the sales person or customer support person). This transparency, along with methodologies like the learning organization and six sigma, has also helped to expand the definition of brand to go beyond just a name, packaging, and a logo – and even beyond Ogilvy’s definition and beyond customer experience. “Brand” is emerging to be defined as a company’s personality. But what does that mean and more importantly, what does that imply to a company?

A personality can be defined as, “the complex of all the attributes—behavioral (“the actions or reactions of a person or animal in response to external or internal stimuli,” dictionary.com), temperamental, emotional and mental--that characterize a unique individual.” (Oxford English Dictionary, or OED). So if “personality” were used to refer to a company, this could be adjusted to imply that a company has all the attributes – behavioral, temperamental, emotional and mental – that characterize uniqueness and individuality. However, a company is a non-living thing (from the OED: “an institution created to



conduct business or an organization of performers and associated personnel”) and this analogy cannot work in that context. A company (or product) needs to be redefined as an organization (which can also be extended to include not-for-profits, government agencies, and other groups) in order to most closely align with uniqueness and the individual. The word “organization” has a similar root to the word organism, as well as a shared definition (the primary definition of organism in the OED is “organic structure; organization”; the secondary definition refers to “an organized being; a living body, either vegetable or animal, composed of different organs or parts with functions which are separate, but mutually dependent, and essential to the life of the individual”). With this assumption, one could take the logical next step that it is possible for an organization to exhibit a personality. The employees and departments of a company become part of the organism/organization and contribute to its character. An organization, by definition, is a living thing like a human being and could therefore be a unique individual and have its own attributes.

As defined earlier, one of the attributes that characterize an individual and his/her personality is behavior. One conceptual way to link organizations with individuals is by considering workflow process as representative of organization behavior. By understanding an organization’s processes, one can make generalizations about characteristics, motives for behaviors, and insights into personality. Processes could exhibit traits inherent in a personality – like trust, likeability, carefulness – and would be reflected in how a company handles a transaction, for example. In that case, a cautious company may have a lot of confirmation messages and make the legal messages more obviously found in its workflow, whereas a more risky company may not ask a customer for the minimal amount of legal information to complete a transaction, or a company that is supportive of its customers has a well thought-out customer support area.

Defining a personality and behaviors (or processes) is key for an organization to succeed. A parallel could be made to individuals and their job searches. Today, most individuals determine what they excel at and find companies, or markets, that have such opportunities. Organizations should do the same thing. Rather than define a set of target consumers to sell to and develop products to achieve that goal, it may make more sense for the organization as a whole to define what it does, what it sells, what it



does best, how it should create it and support it, and how it should sell it. This way, an organization could more easily would determine what target markets to pursue (and determine all market layers that make sense to pursue). By defining the target markets too early, an organization may try to rework itself to meet the needs of too broad a group and be fragmented in its approach to each product offering. A defined brand or personality will keep the organization focused on its goals and keep it working so that it meets the needs of the target audience, rather than trying to appease the audience with features that don't fit its personality or best present the value an organization offers.

Brand is an integral part of the consumer experience field. Before an organization can know its customers, it needs to know itself and how it does business and have a vision for how it wants to do business in the future. A company's true value comes from its "personality" or process for how it works. If that isn't clear, the audience will recognize that and not have clear expectations for how to work with that company, which results in dissatisfaction and potential customers choosing another organization for its solution.

