

What is a Brand, Really?

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If I were to ask you about your “brand”, what would you describe to me? A lot of business owners would show me their logo or talk about their product name. For many people, a brand is simply that – a picture or a name.

In actuality, a brand exists in a person’s head. It is the reaction and the thoughts that we experience when we see a logo or product name. For example, what comes to mind when you see the Jaguar logo? You probably not only picture the luxury sports car itself, but you also imagine the sensation of driving that car. How about FedEx? If something has to arrive “absolutely, positively overnight”, isn’t FedEx the first courier service that comes to mind? The entire FedEx brand is built upon the promise that using FedEx removes the worry about whether your delivery will be made on time. So when we see the FedEx or Jaguar logo and have that immediate, intuitive reaction, that is their brand.

Your company’s brand is the unique promise you have made to your customers that sets you apart from your competitors. It should be simple and direct, and easy to understand. When a customer sees your logo, it should immediately bring to mind what is unique about you, as well as positive experiences with your product or service. For example, when I am thirsty, I don’t think “I want a cold, caramel-colored carbonated drink in a can.” I think, “I want a Coke.” My experience tells me that Coke’s brand promise is to provide me with a refreshing beverage that I will thoroughly enjoy. Similarly, in your business, your customers’ experiences become your “brand”.

Large companies manage their brands just like any other asset on their balance sheet. It is important to think about your own brand in the same way. Your brand exists to generate sales and profits for you, and so you must manage it with consistent communication and assurance that everyone in your organization is committed to delivering your brand promise.