

10 Key Steps To Building A Strong Brand

By Mark Zust



Your brand should be your company's most valuable strategic asset. Realize that building a brand is simple — not easy, but simple. Your brand, developed strategically over the long haul and built on a rock solid foundation of quality and integrity, will set your company apart from the pack. For good. Here are 10 steps to get you there:

1. Understand that your brand is a reflection of what the market values. It's up to you to find, communicate and deliver on that value, every day.
2. Create a different meaning for your brand that customers find relevant and can care about. Differentiation and relevance, much more than mere awareness, keep your brand strong.
3. Know exactly who you want to talk to. Then, know your competition. Make the distinction between your company and your competitors crystal clear to your audience.
4. To discover a different and relevant brand idea, look for the obvious. The best answers typically come from talking to your customers and spending time in the field. The goal is to uncover a meaningful feature, service or other value that no one has notice before.
5. Make sure your brand idea is in sync with your business strategy. What exactly are you selling? Does what your brand promises match up with your core product or service? Does it support and leverage your business development action plan? The brand represents your unflinching promise to the customer, so it's got to be right.
6. Capture your brand's essence in a simple statement. It doesn't have to be clever, but it does have to be easy to understand and repeat.
7. Build your brand ambassadors. Share the meaning and goals of your brand openly with all employees. Help them understand their role, at all points of contact with the customer, in delivering on your brand promise.
8. Spend your money wisely. Once you've determined which points of contact with customers have the most potential to drive perception and grow your business, invest only in these areas. These interactions are where your brand can really shine. They represent your best opportunities to build new business and go deeper with existing customers.
9. Remember that your customers rule. Evaluate your position with clients twice a year, at least. Make sure that your valued difference is still different in their minds and be sure to listen to your core customers first. They're your foundation.
10. Keep in mind that branding is for the long haul. Strong brands last because they work hard to communicate their difference. The people behind the brand are committed to doing whatever it takes to deliver on the brand promise, day in and day out. Building and maintaining an unbreakable brand is a lot of work, but the support earned from your loyal, growing customer base makes it all worth it.

For more than 25 years Mark has helped companies large and small get the most from their brand investment by providing brand tune-ups, overhauls and everything in between. That's why business owners call Mark the "brand mechanic". He is available for brand evaluation, consulting, messaging and team training. For details, visit www.zustco.com. To schedule a meeting with Mark to discuss your brand, call Zust and Company at 440-777-8373.