



A Brand Is a Promise: How Strong Is Yours?

Some years ago, marketers discovered that brands reside not in logos, slogans, jingles and television commercials, but rather in the minds of customers.

But that picture isn't complete, because a brand, at its core, is a promise that involves at least two parties — seller and customer. Add two more, if you value your reputation with shareholders and the community.

A Known Quantity

A brand can promise high quality. Or it can pledge safe cars, competent tech support or fast order turnaround. In each case, the brand promises *a known quantity*. It signals the world what to expect from a company.

Promoting and protecting a brand involves principles more fundamental than marketing strategy. The brand must not only win trust on the outside; it must also register what a company is capable of producing, consistently and sustainably. The brand transmits a company's essentials.

More than a few firms have tried to establish brands based on unrealistic positioning — and the strain of supporting such brands has broken some backs.

An Organic Connection

Can a low-price player reposition, and take a brand in a new direction that's based on high quality? It can, and a strong marketing campaign can make the switch in the public eye. But the switch may be harder on the plant floor, where the culture is historically based on price competition. If the

disconnect persists, a promise waits to be broken.

To fulfill its brand promise, a company must rely on its people and processes. Good decisions happen when the right people are in the right places, aligned and empowered in support of a promise they have internalized. Consistent processes ensure that one leader's departure doesn't upset brand continuity.

Clarifying the relationship between company and brand requires a close look at business fundamentals — something our firm can help you with.