

## Organisational branding: What you need to know

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Organizational branding is where human resources, marketing, and talent management intersect to help attract the best talent. In a market with intense competition, organizations that wish to be unique and prominent must offer candidates persuasive reasons to join their company.

### Branding in the Background

As a business leader, it's important to help employees understand the core branding concepts that their daily actions will impact. Think of your organization as an amalgamation of people. They work in a company culture with shared ideas that help to reinforce these core concepts. They can follow through on activities such as creating good content for the website and helping customers determine which products or services to choose if they embody these ideas each day. Recently, we were reading a [Forbes.com article by Jayson DeMers](#) explaining that a small company's content marketing strategy should be based on research, but it should also include a set of objective targets. Employees should know why they write content for a social media campaign or rewrite most content on the official blog. Employees should understand the thinking behind other marketing activities that their company has planned for the near future.

### Branding Is Important Because Customers Are Savvy

Earlier in this article, I mentioned how your competitors might be creating value for their target audience in new ways. Providing educational content is becoming the primary way to gain customers. This is true because modern consumers are savvier than ever.

Gone are the days when you can build a website and add EVERY piece of information about your company to the six pages of the site. No one reads that much text anymore especially if it doesn't provide value. Today's consumers use the Internet to solve their problems. What problem are you solving?

If there are particular problems that ONLY you can solve, write about it. Answering questions that your audience asks gives you a leg up on your competitors. Shooting a video is an even better solution to answering questions. Getting in front of a camera and answering a customer's question helps:

- Provide value by educating those that are already looking for the answer.
- Give character to your brand, making you respected in your space.

Understanding today's consumer will allow you to strengthen your brand messaging in ways you never thought were possible.

## **Branding Will Separate You From Your Competition**

Do you feel safe? I ask because you might not have much competition in the market you serve, right now. How would you feel in 3 years when other companies spring up in your market to compete with you. Do you feel less safe? I'll frame the question another way: Are you confident that your current customers aren't looking for greener grass?

If you don't have much competition now, you will. It's a guarantee. Someone is going to wonder why you aren't providing your customers with X. They're going to come along and serve the needy.

But, if your branding is on point, your customers won't care if the grass is gold on the other side. They'll trust your brand because of the way you treated them when the "other guys" gave them the cold shoulder. They'll respect your brand for providing consistent value when your competitors made critical cuts to maintain their margins.

Keeping your branding a priority will permeate throughout your organization, making it hard for the competition to keep up with you.

## **Branding Is a Science**

While we've talked about the importance of branding from an external (customer and competition) perspective, branding inside of your organization is also necessary. Aligning members of your organization with the brand and what it represents is vital to your company's success. Your team members should always be aware of what your company represents. Every employee, no matter their role, should have an up-to-date and deep understanding of the brand and its values.

When you communicate your brand throughout your organization, amazing things start to happen. It will become easier for your team to achieve success because they all know what success for the company looks like. Your brand will be empowered because employees will handle situations with consistency and purpose.

It's here where you can start to see the importance of establishing your branding internally with your team.

## **Branding Enhancement With Defined Criteria**

To strengthen your brand, consider the way it's thought of with your audience. Is your brand recognizable within your community? When people speak to others about your brand, how do they do it? Let's take a look at some of the criteria that you can use to enhance your brand. We'll also look at a few ways you can enhance your brand in these ways.

### **Memorability**

One of your top goals with your brand should be to achieve a high level of brand awareness. Any

elements that promote awareness are inherently memorable. Brand elements that gain your audience's attention are more likely to help with recall or recognition. This helps you stay memorable to those most important to you.

One way to be memorable with your audience is to carefully consider the colors you use in your brand. Using some shade of purple might help your audience remember you as thoughtful or as a visionary. A brand conveyed visually in orange might make you seem good-natured and optimistic, but it could also lead your audience to perceive you as loud or frivolous.

The psychology of colors can have either a positive or a negative effect on your brand. Either way, colors help your brand stay memorable to your audience. For more on colors and how they're used in branding, check out this infographic on [The Psychology of Color in Business](#) or this one on [responses to color by people in the western hemisphere](#).

## 6 tips for strong organizational branding

- **Link your brand strategy to your business strategy**

The first tip is actually also the most important one, says Hoekstra: “The brand strategy must support the business strategy and that belongs to the boardroom. This is not yet the case in many businesses. Only when there is involvement with the brand in the top layers of an organization, can good brand management have a chance of succeeding and you can plan work on improving your brand performance.”

- **Pay attention to the execution**

According to Hoekstra, we have to make a switch in our way of working. “Often a lot is invested in brand strategy and design (‘why’ and ‘what’). My advice is to also pay attention to the ‘how’ question: the execution phase. How do you make a brand agile and sustainable, and how do you ensure that there is coherence, that the brand is well propagated and is performing across all departments? You can have a good idea, but the execution is key, else you will have invested in something that does not translate to the outside world and therefore has no effect on the value of your organization.”

- **Do not enforce consistency, but encourage coherence**

Hoekstra mentions the importance of flexibility in brand management: “The world around us is changing so fast. Thanks to digitization, there is more and more interaction with brands; by employees, customers and users, alike. The corporate identity ‘police’ that existed before, no longer works in the current era. You do not want to slow down interactions with your brand. Brand management must therefore be more dynamic. Above all, try to encourage coherency, instead of enforcing consistency.”

- **Collaboration: make the brand negotiable**

Collaboration and good communication are also crucial when it comes to brand organization. “You

often see a gap between marketing and the brand: marketing does not always strengthen the brand and the brand does not always strengthen marketing. Departments that have a lot of involvement with the brand hardly cooperate. This needs to improve. Keep communication open and make sure that the brand remains a topic of conversation across all departments.”

- **Utilize the right in-house expertise and define responsibilities**

It is important that you have the right expertise in-house and that the role’s responsibilities are clearly defined: “Within most organizations, the corporate communication manager is responsible for the brand. Agencies are hired when it comes to brand strategy and design. But what is the right choice when it comes to the implementation and organization of your brand? My advice: appoint a brand manager or seek assistance from an external party. In any case, it is important that it is clear who is ultimately responsible from both a central and decentral level: what activities are required from a strategic, tactical and operational level?”

- **Brand Analytics: make your brand performance measurable**

How do you gain insight into the performance of your brand? And what exactly does the brand contribute to the results of the organization? Hoekstra: “The boardroom expects hard data, especially when investments have to be made in the brand. If you want to organize your brand well, you need to get started with brand analytics. You should know how the various channels and brand carriers perform and what they contribute to total brand performance and, ultimately, company performance. These insights help you to optimize your brand strategy and convince important stakeholders in your company of the value of the brand. A [Brand Dashboard](#) is an excellent tool for that.”

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