

What it takes to be a 'Top Brand'

By [Rainer Gottschick](#)

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At Avis, we firmly believe that hard work, commitment to our people and remaining humble enough to remember that you always need to try harder is what makes a good brand a great brand.



Rainer Gottschick

This is why we are so honoured to receive the Business to Business award in the Car Hire Category at the annual Sunday Times Top Brand Awards for the 12th consecutive year and know that it is this attitude that has helped us retain this coveted achievement for so long.

What is it that makes us a 'top brand'? How are we doing things differently? I think you'll find it all stems from our attitude towards people.

Our vision has always been to exceed customers' expectations at every interface and we believe that this accolade is recognition for our commitment and on-going dedication to continually give our customers a memorable experience. In short, we're not a car rental business, we're a people business that just so happens to rent cars.

Customers come first

The first and most obvious way to develop your brand and remain ahead of your competitors is to put your customers at the centre of everything you do. The strategy you adopt should not only be about the product. Competitive edge comes from driving people and taking customers on a journey they will not find anywhere else.

You need to remember what industry you're in. For example, we're in the service industry. This means we need to be comfortable being servants. From the bottom to the top of your organisation, it comes down to the things you do for your customers, so they always know they come first.

Never generalise. By this, I mean that you must know that every customer is different. They have different wants, different needs and different expectations. Make sure you know what each customer group needs, be they travelling for business or pleasure. If you listen to them, then you will understand what makes them happy.

Your employees are your greatest brand ambassadors

It was Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon who said: "Your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room". While it's obvious that the 'people' he refers to in this quote are mostly comprised of your customers, it is in fact your own employees who can be the greatest advocates for your brand.

When it comes to your employees, you have to create an inclusive environment of mutual respect. Respect is earned, not demanded. If you don't make people feel valued and help them enjoy their time at your organisation, what's the point of it all?

As a brand, remaining ahead of your competitors is never an easy task. However, if you come to grips with the key aspects of your business that you need to get right without fail, you will always come out on top. I'm not talking about 100 things here. Break it down into your people, your customers and the service you offer both these groups, because loyal employees lead to loyal customers, it's that simple.

Keep track of your progress

We make a lot of promises to our customers. It is important to make sure you are sticking to those promises by measuring it as objectively as you can. At Avis, we do this through the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) score, measured by external market researchers.

We're proud to say that our overall Avis combined CSI score has consistently remained above 90% since July 2011 to date.

'We Try Harder' is the Avis ethos. By continually raising the bar we encourage ourselves to push the limits of customer service. Our CSI score reflects the effort we put into this business and our customers' satisfaction on a daily basis.

As a brand, it stands to reason that high levels of customer satisfaction generate great word of mouth, keeping us top of mind when it comes to purchasing decisions.

It's not an easy task to be a top brand in such a competitive marketplace, but the rewards are high. At Avis, we will continue to strive towards retaining our legacy as the country's top brand in the car rental sector. It is not about the award, or the recognition. It is a reflection on the way we treat people both inside and outside our business, which is at the heart of everything we do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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