

Banning the word brand

 By Patrick Carmody 22 May 2009

Gather around, adfolk, this is big. We gonna be changing some of our adspeak now. Seeing the the concept of brand is far too veiled in mystique and jargon, let's try this. Let's drop this word brand and start talking about experience for staff and customers. Everything visual we can call visual identity design.



Here's why:

When people that work in any position of authority in a company are:

1. aware of their roles as experience designers, and
2. are able to weave a specific ethos into these experiences,

the result is an impossible to copy competitive advantage.

Getting the above right is a sure way to attract and retain staff and customers. Sometimes they call this 'branding' - but then logo design and advertising is also called branding, so people get confused.

The problem is most managers do not see themselves as experience designers. It is far too smarmy.

Instead, they are in the game of getting stuff done and making money - sometimes the stuff they do smack of a certain ethos (like when they're talking about branding - item four on the agenda), but mostly they just do stuff.

But while they are fixing stuff, changing stuff, buying stuff, selling stuff etc, they are usually impacting the unique experience of their staff and customers - usually unknowingly.

Lack of awareness

Isn't that bizarre? That lack of awareness. It makes them so replaceable and it turns business into a lottery. Yet, we live it every day.

It confounds me as to how this concept is still a relatively novel one and how it mainly lives in the realm of brand consultancies. Somewhere deep down all of us know that, as consumers, we make purchase and loyalty decisions based on how our experience is being uniquely shaped by the people in organisations.

Sure, there are many organisations that practice excellence in their field, but how many create a uniquely excellent experience? Most companies follow the herd in their category - aiming to just be one of the members of the category. Why not try and do stuff differently in a specific direction? Surely this is the most fundamental thing that a business is based on?

I guess it's a case of not having the initial definition in place - we have a very well-defined set of visual rules but normally scant regard for principles that shape our behaviour. So the visual stuff is aligned with military consistency but behaviour is potluck. In a world where we make decisions based on a set of experienced behaviours, this is crazy indeed.

Homegrown experience heroes

How many established coffee shop chains, airlines and insurance companies scratch their heads at the likes of our very own Vida e Caffé, Kulula.com, Discovery and Outsurance, asking why are they klappping us in customer and staff acquisition and retention?

It's simple: these new players realised that to beat the incumbents, all they had to do was to place as much if not more importance, on human behaviour as they do on the size and shape of their logo.

ABOUT PATRICK CARMODY

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