

The Ten Commandments for Rebuilding a Brand

Submitted by: Pirate Communications

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European branding consultancy Henrion Ludlow Schmidt today launched its ten commandments for companies contemplating rebuilding a tarnished or tired brand. A classic example of this is the way 'Big Food' brands have been hit with a triple whammy of the Atkins Diet, greater competition from new and innovative outlets like Starbucks and accusations of not doing enough about obesity in developed countries. Their previous key attributes of convenience, taste, hygiene and choice are now not enough; these companies have to reinvigorate their brands to reflect the new values of consumers.

Chris Ludlow, co-founder of Henrion Ludlow Schmidt, said: "While many companies understand the value of a brand and talk about it in terms of brand value or brand equity, they still struggle to understand how to get the most out of a brand and ensure its longevity. Brand management and rejuvenation needs to be approached in a holistic manner taking into account all aspects of a business, as a brand does not exist in isolation."

Henrion Ludlow Schmidt's ten commandments are as follows:

1. Does the brand really need a rebuild? If it isn't broke, don't fix it.
2. Can the brand be saved? Before even thinking about rebuilding a brand an organisation needs to decide if it is economically viable to save it. Is it cheaper to develop a new one or acquire a well-respected brand instead? Developing a new brand from scratch is an expensive and risky enterprise as many companies have found out. France Telecom managed to improve its mobile brand successfully by importing the Orange ethos after acquiring the UK mobile phone operator from Vodafone.
3. Everything communicates: remember that every action, or lack of it, within a business communicates. For instance, how can you expect high quality goods from a company that doesn't treat its staff with respect? The best way to think about this is to look at branding in a holistic manner. Fixing the brand may fall outside 'conventional branding' issues to include, human resources, operations, logistics and environmental policies.
4. What does your brand really stand for? Find out about what your brand really means to customers and other stakeholders. What is the gap between the values that the brand is supposed to have and how it is perceived by customers? Are there any positive attributes attached to your brands by customers, that were not part of the brand values that you meant it to have? Are any of the values attached to the brand no longer relevant?
5. Rebuild the brand from the bottom up, not from the top down: many companies make the mistake of presenting customer-facing employees with a finished 'brand'. Successful brands like Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream have been built with the consensus of employees and their local community. Despite stories of aggressive competition with other ice cream suppliers and that the fact that Ben and Jerry have sold their shares to Unilever, Ben & Jerry's continues to have a homespun 'hippy' fun image.
6. Build the brand around a vision relevant to all stakeholders: only by having a vision that everybody

buys into can you ensure that the customer experience of the brand is successful. Having a brand that is different in essence from the company vision is likely to cause internal dissent and external confusion.

7. How is your brand taken to the customer? When looking at your brand you need to look beyond the most obvious contact points that help make up a customer's brand experience. Are there new channels that can be exploited? Do you have channel partners on board and, if so, are they conducting themselves in a way which is detrimental to your brand? Car manufacturers have been working at controlling their image through associated car dealerships ever more tightly.

8. A brand is for life, not just for Christmas: when thinking about the attributes of a brand, these need to be able to outlast customer fads or the latest business trends. A brand should be thought about in a strategic manner rather than just in terms of next quarter's sales figures.

9. Shrink the brand: many brands need rejuvenation because they have been overused, blurred or stretched to encompass areas where they are meaningless. Reinvigoration of the brand can be achieved by refocusing the brand on its core elements.

10. Evolution rather than revolution: be prepared to change your brand gradually. Many of the great brands have evolved in stages to stay relevant rather than through making huge changes. This preserves goodwill and brand recognition amongst stakeholders.

-ENDS-

About Henrion Ludlow Schmidt

Henrion Ludlow Schmidt is a leading European brand consultancy with offices in London and Hamburg. Founded in 1981, Henrion Ludlow Schmidt advises companies on holistic branding, which recognises branding issues across organisations' entire operations. Henrion Ludlow Schmidt has worked with a variety of organisations including Mercedes-Benz, Deutsche Bank, Transport for London, Miele and KLM.

Henrion Ludlow Schmidt's founders Klaus Schmidt and Chris Ludlow recently authored 'Inclusive Branding' (Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), which investigates the holistic approach to brands featuring case studies ranging from Virgin to Manchester United.

For more information please go to www.henrion.com

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