



By Larry Gulko, Barketing Coach & Public Speaker
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When you think about it, Ralph Waldo Emerson truly understood the concept of Brand Marketing back in 1840. His philosophy focused on being a leader, defining your real point of difference, and doing something really remarkable. His mantra, "Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Now, isn't that precisely what Brand Marketing

is all about? Go where there is no path and leave a trail. Create a new category, capture mindshare, dominate the market, and be the best-selling brand in your category.

Let's take a look at a few brands that are successfully leaving a trail. The Trek trail is Mountain Bike, The Callaway trail is Oversize Driver, FedEx is Overnight Delivery, Mont Blanc is Fat Pen, Swatch is Fashion Watches, Heinz is Thick, Slow, Band-Aid is Adhesive Bandages, and the Red Bull trail is Energy Drink.

Each of these brands is known for one thing. They created a new product category, built their brand in the prospect's mind, and are now driving huge business value long-term. Most importantly, they're focused.

Marketing is a battle of perceptions. And, perceptions drive reality.

Ask yourself - What word(s) do you "own" in the minds of your customers? What trail are you leaving? What are you doing to drive brand preference and be perceived different from your competition?

Your brand is one of the most valuable financial assets you own. A brand represents trust, a promise, and a perceived value. You must not only achieve phenomenal customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, but also go beyond by doing things that are unexpected and delivering the ultimate customer experience. That's what delivers loyal, repeat customers.



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Create a

Branding is not a destination, but a journey we're going to be on for a while. To conquer in today's ever-changing competitive landscape and create a winning brand that drives brand preference and revenue, you must create a new category to separate your company from the rest of the "me-too" companies and products. Then capture mindshare, dominate your product category, and "own" the product category in the minds of the customer. By doing this you will earn your marketing stripes as the best-selling brand which will strengthen your leadership credential and propel sales to new heights.

What are you really selling?

You're not just selling square feet of dozens of pieces of equipment, pro shop products, café style dining, fitness lessons, group exercise and just about everything else in between. You're selling something much more grande. Think about it -- your competitors have the same physical facilities right around the corner.

So, why should the consumer buy from you? What's so compelling? What is so special about your club? Why should someone take the time to make your club their destination?

Strive to create a unique brand image, brand essence, personality, and customer-centric culture to differentiate you from the rest of the pack.

And, looking at your business in a new way, from a different perspective does not require a hefty budget. It simply demands you take the time to look at your business as a brand that delivers a specific value and an exceptional experience, and making those key decisions that will result in you improving the overall performance of your business.

To create a winning brand long-term, you must focus, create the silver-bullet that uniquely positions your brand in the market and enables you to own something in the mind of the customer. Enhance brand awareness and build brand equity by being known for something special. Because, when you try to be all things to all people, you generally end up being known for nothing to many.

Winning Brand

Create a wonderful experience

The sum of customer experiences creates your brand. Every little step, every touch-point is a test you have to pass to make good on the promise of your brand. It's one thing to get new customers - yet another to keep them. And, keep them buying, happy, and raving about your club and spreading the word as to all the wonderful things your company represents. This is powerful marketing since the best source for new revenue comes from your existing customers and those they refer.

That's why I emphasize the importance of being focused, specializing in something, making sure every touch-point (externally and internally) delivers on your brand's promise, and being known as the first in the market with a unique product, service or program.

Marketing is a battle of perceptions

Not products. Not services. Not facilities. Perception drives reality. You will win the battle by making your brand relevant to your customers' lives. Ask yourself: How will your product make their lives better? How will you

enhance their quality of life, not just individually, but as a family? What are you doing to enhance the perception of the quality of your products, services, and personal attention? What are you doing to create a greater sense of community - a sense of belonging?

We purchase our favorite products because we perceive a value - a value we feel cannot get anywhere else. So, deliver on your promise, keep integrity in your message and personal touch, and demonstrate to your customers they can expect this value over and over.

How do we buy?

Rationally and emotionally. When I refer to rational, it relates to all the facts the company is proud of, i.e., 25th Anniversary, 17,000 customers, 3 courses, 22 events a year, etc. The rational information is indeed important, but typically does not enhance the customer's experience to the point of significantly driving trial, preference, loyalty, and sales.

Rather, it is the emotional component, the emotional wrapping that helps you bond, really con-

nect with your customer, makes the sale. We all know it's easy to buy at Staples, convenient to buy at McDonalds, and the BMW is the ultimate driving machine. Emotional connections work.

Make your brand - their brand

Remember...an idea is called eccentric until the idea succeeds. So, create new ideas that will make your brand a great, powerful brand that grows revenue and drives success long-term. And, focus only on those initiatives that will make "your brand" "their brand." Larry Gulko

Larry Gulko, a well-known marketing coach and public speaker, is an expert in building brands. He has a successful track record in creating marketing ideas that capture mindshare and drive brand preference, increase revenue, and improve business performance. Larry has a passion for making companies and their products the #1 brand in their product category. Larry resides in Boston and can be reached at 781.784.0089 or email larry@larrygulko.com (www.larrygulko.com).



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