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# Building Brand Through Sales

by BOB GOLD

***How do customers view your company?***

***What outcomes do they expect to achieve from interactions with your company and sales force?***

***Are you selling the corporate brand along with product and services during every transaction?***

Each year, corporate America spends millions of dollars on advertising, direct mail, public relations and a wealth of other marketing communication vehicles to drive and create greater brand awareness among customers and prospects.

Unfortunately, many companies overlook the use of one of their most powerful resources in the branding process — their sales force. Good or bad, sales is the living embodiment of your brand to customers. With every interaction, sales provides the personality for all your company's branding efforts. Plus, it also possesses the power to drive brand loyalty and create ongoing up-selling and cross-selling opportunities.

So, if your sales force isn't already selling brand, the time to start is now. The benefits of wrapping brand around the simple selling of products and services can normally provide quantifiable results in a relatively short period of time. This can include an increase in overall sales, entries into other areas of the company, and enhanced relationships based on a deeper understanding of your company's core values, history and operating procedures.

To further this cause, here are tips for incorporating brand into sales and leveraging your company's successes and key value systems with customers and prospects.

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## “Reason for Being”

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What is your mission statement and corporate philosophy? Do your customers understand how these values can help them achieve better outcomes?

Customers and prospects are more likely to establish emotional bonds and partner with associates that are upfront, knowledgeable and possess a clear history for delivering on promises and achieving outcomes in their industry.

As stated in the cliché, “Actions speak louder than words,” every communication must be viewed as an opportunity to assert brand image and drive brand loyalty.

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## Sales Presentations

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Sell the benefits of your product and services to mid-level management and buyers. Sell outcomes to executives.

Brand selling highlighted by goals for client outcomes is essential for establishing and maintaining ongoing relationships with senior management. It's not enough for these decision-makers to understand your wares, they must understand who you are and how your company can help them raise earnings per share, grow gross margins and achieve short- and long-term sales projections.

Use every meeting to stress the value of your products and services as well as to reinforce your "reason for being." No doubt your company has a mission statement and operating philosophy. Continually cite real-world examples as to how your company can make these words come to life and help clients achieve objectives.

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#### Success Stories

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Case studies and bylines provide valuable sales tools. They position companies and their executives as leaders and visionaries in their fields, while offering excel-

lent third-party examples of prominent successes.

However, do they drive the brand in addition to products and services? The preparation of all news devices and communication tools should correspond to a template or checklist developed jointly between sales and marketing.

Lexus sells quality. IBM sells service. What are your company's key selling propositions, and how are they exemplified in the copy of all sales and marketing collateral? All material written by and about your company should be viewed as an opportunity to reinforce these brand points to clients and prospects.

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#### "Brand Touch" Visits

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Sales is the face of your company to the customer. Use every visit to drive brand and reinforce the long-term benefits of partnering with your company.

How often have you purchased a product and service and never heard from the salesperson again until its time to renew the warranty or contract? Face-time is important for establishing trust in the relationship and should not only include the sales force, but also your company's senior management.

Each new sale should be accompanied with a timetable for "brand refresher meetings." Exemplify brand philosophies in person. Personally take the time to resolve issues and identify new opportunities. Un-

## Quick Tips for Integrating Brand with Sales Techniques

- Insert "brand training" and techniques on the use of your brand to change customer buying behavior into your sales training. Don't focus solely on product benefits. Make sure customers and prospects are well aware of the advantages of dealing with a company that stands behind those benefits.
- Make sure all presentations focus on your customers' outcomes. The first slide should clearly state achievable results should the customer buy into your "brand" (not just your product).
- Incorporate people into success stories. Prospects will be more receptive knowing that your company is focused on helping people just like them. Simply stating corporate benefits will not create emotional bonding.
- Send a thank-you note from your CEO that contains "brand messaging." Customers will not only feel appreciated, but will gain greater respect for your corporate culture.

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***Branding is a product of consistency at every level. The messages, whether delivered during a sales pitch or offered in advertising copy, must be the same.***

doubtedly, these actions will expand your foothold within the company and open new avenues for up-and cross-selling. In this case, familiarity will likely only breed respect and trust for your sales efforts and company in general.

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### **Employee and Sales Training**

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Poll your employees. Ask them to describe your company. Tell them to cite examples of how your company delivers on its mission statement and brand philosophies.

After such exercises, many companies are surprised to find the difference in answers. If your employees don't understand who you are and what you stand for, how can you expect your customers to readily know?

Branding is a product of consistency at every level. The messages, whether delivered during a sales pitch or offered in advertising copy, must be the same.

Make your brand image an integral part of every internal presentation and communication. Reinforce brand philosophies at orientation meetings and circulate success stories to all employees, especially the sales staff.

In addition, make role-playing a part of internal sales meetings to ensure salespersons thoroughly understand your brand and are up to date with examples for customers.

Ultimately, also remember that sales is the consummate marketing research resource. Your sales force is integral to refreshing the brand as well as testing its premises.

For the best results and latest intelligence, use sales as an investigative arm of the company. Their findings and successes will provide the surest methods for testing brand awareness and effectiveness in the marketplace. Unfortunately, the bottom line doesn't lie. □



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