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Make or break
Delivering on your brand promise

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In a fiercely competitive business environment, companies rely on the strength of their brand and the promise their brand represents. A brand promise comprises what can be expected from all interactions with a company's brand, including how customers feel emotionally about their experience. Brand promise is also embodied by an organization's people, and it's translated through its products, services, and actions.

In every industry today, businesses and consumers are bombarded with an overwhelming choice of products and services. A distinctive and well-executed brand promise can cut through the clutter and drive intense customer loyalty and increased revenue. In short, a brand promise has the potential to make or break a brand.

Why is your brand promise so important?

While a brand promise may seem hard to define, it can directly affect your company's bottom line—positively or negatively. It can translate into lower cost of sales, because selling more products and services to loyal, emotionally connected customers is less expensive than winning over new customers. Furthermore, when your company consistently delivers on its brand promise, it reinforces the organization's reputation and builds brand equity—a store of goodwill that can help you weather situations when the customer experience may be compromised.

Delivering on brand promise is directly tied to overall brand strength, and there's plenty of evidence that a strong brand affects financial performance. In 2016, the top 100 global brands were valued at \$3.4 trillion.¹ In addition, the share prices of the top 100 global brands outperformed the S&P 500 by over 60.7 percent from April 2007 to April 2016.²

On the other hand, when a company fails to stand behind its brand promise, the opposite can happen. Look no further than product recalls or negative social media attention to see how *not* delivering on a brand promise can adversely impact a company, both in terms of reputation and market value. With such a hefty premium placed on brand and reputation, it's more important than ever to be on the alert for situations that can damage or sabotage them.

Getting behind your brand promise

Leaders who truly understand, embrace, and are committed to executing their organization's brand promise are often better able to anticipate and

respond to brand risks. They know that reacting swiftly and thoroughly to problems as they arise can help mitigate any hits their brand may endure. They also understand the value of putting processes in place to ensure their brand promise is upheld and any budding problems can be identified and handled well in advance.

There are three important areas to consider when executing on your brand promise:



Measure

Conduct customer and employee surveys to determine how well your brand promise resonates with both customers and employees. When presented with your brand promise, do customers consider it appealing, unique, and believable? Based on their recent experiences, do they feel you're doing a good job of delivering on your promise? Do your employees understand the brand promise? Are they committed to fulfilling it? And just as important, do they believe senior leadership shares this commitment? How engaged are they? This data can help you decide what adjustments will make it easier to deliver on your brand promise.

Measurement can also show the link between the execution of your brand promise and financial returns. Yet surprisingly few companies effectively track these metrics. For example, a recent poll revealed that only 26 percent of organizations measured the financial impact of customer experiences.³

¹ "BrandZ: Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands 2016," Millward Brown.

² Ibid.

³ Poll conducted during the November, 19, 2015, Deloitte Dbriefs webcast, "Leaders and Laggards: Creating shareholder value through customer experience measurement and brand protection risk management," Deloitte Development LLC.



Monitor

Keep regular tabs on how well you deliver on your brand promise and create standards that operationalize it. Measure performance on those standards through regularly scheduled evaluations. For example, say Company X has made customer responsiveness a part of its brand promise. To support this promise, it has created a policy that every written customer inquiry must be answered within 48 hours and every phone call must be answered in less than five minutes. Careful record keeping and logging of inquiries and complaints would verify that these standards were met.

Monitoring and establishing early detection and effective risk management helps organizations turn potential brand threats into opportunities for delivering on their brand promise and further strengthening their brand. Without consistent monitoring, the brand promise can become obsolete. It's easy to establish policies, but it takes time and commitment to implement and see them through on a daily basis.



Train and engage

Finally, make sure your employees embody your brand promise and understand how to effectively execute on it. Inconsistency between internal and external branding messages can weaken organizational culture, confuse employees, and negatively impact customer experience. Ongoing training is important, especially for those who have direct contact with customers.

But merely training employees isn't enough. For them to deliver on your brand promise, they need to feel as if they're part of something important. Including

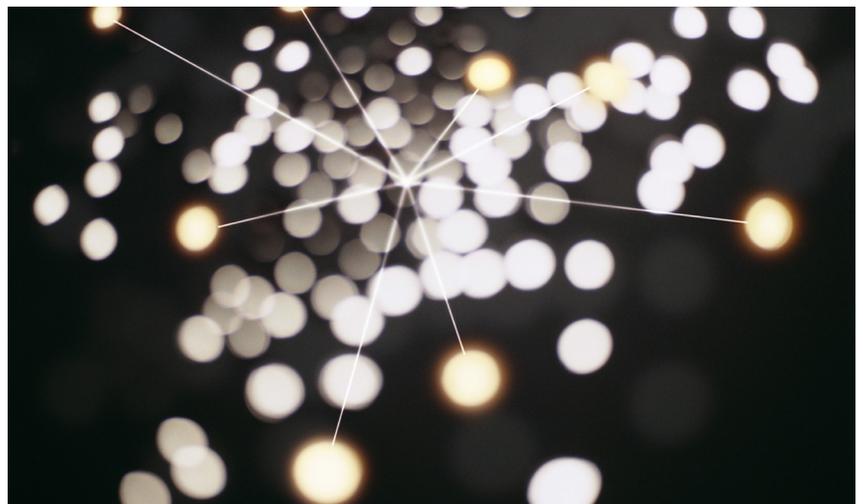
employees in decisions, asking for ideas on how to improve initiatives, and answering the "what's in it for me" question in a compelling manner are all critical to enlisting the support of employees.

Front-line employees can also serve as your eyes and ears in evaluating the customer experience and front-line processes. Create mechanisms for them to weigh in and provide feedback on how customers are responding to your brand.

Turning insights into action

Continuous measurement and monitoring can yield important insights about how your brand promise is resonating in the marketplace and how you can improve its impact. But unless you leverage those insights and turn them into an ongoing and sustainable plan of action, they won't get you very far.

Companies with a consistently strong and differentiated brand promise work hard to keep it that way. They don't simply stay abreast of customer sentiment. They monitor and gather real-time feedback from the marketplace. And they use it to create action plans to consistently improve the execution of their brand promise and protect it from harm.



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