

Progressions Inc.

Sales Training & Consulting



Brand Equity

Building Your Brand from the Inside Out

We all need to understand the importance of brand recognition. Many national firms will immediately come to mind with the simple mention of “brand”. Starbucks is easily recognized with their mermaid and Target with its red bull’s-eye. The key to all of this though is when we think of that image what comes to our mind? When we see a Starbucks logo, how then would we describe the company behind it? I often use Starbucks as an example in my classes and ask the question what does Starbucks mean to you? Hands immediately shoot in the air and everyone has a comment about this hugely successful national chain. Here are some of the comments I hear:

It’s a great experience.

Always clean.

They remember my drinks

It’s a great place to go and have a meeting.

Service is always good.

These are great comments and do not happen by mistake. Starbucks is a company that sets standards for service and holds their representatives accountable to them and as a result creates a very positive environment. Many of you may have heard that Starbucks likes to position themselves as “the third place”. One goes to work and they come home. Starbucks hopes that the “third place” is to frequent their establishment on a regular basis. This has actually become true in our family as my husband and I have Sunday routine of going to our local Starbucks in Lynden Washington, buying the local paper and sharing a positive experience. We look forward to this and it has become our Sunday “third place”.



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We could do the same exercise with Target, Home Depot, Safeway Stores or any other recognizable company and brand. Here are some questions for you to ponder and perfect in your business.

- Is your brand accepted, understood and fully utilized? (This is a hefty question.)
- Do your representatives accept your brand and embrace it?
- Do they truly understand what your message, image, human involvement and company purpose is all about?
- If the preceding two points are met are you fully utilizing them? There are so many things one can do to accentuate their brand. It is simple. Your brand should be on every single piece of communication you use, give away, and display in the front of your store or on your apparel. The more you market your brand the more people will recognize your company by its brand. Then of course the second part of this is what does that brand mean? How would someone describe your company?
- Do employees embrace the service standards and community position that your brand represents?
- Do your representatives fully appreciate what you give back to the community in which your business is located?
- Are your service standards easily understood, accepted, and practiced?
- Are you consistent?

Build your brand from the inside out. To build your brand, all employees must embrace it. This means a formal training program must be in place so that this happens. Training must be ongoing and fully integrated with all that your brand represents. All outward communication will send your brand's message. Just what kind of message comes to a customer's mind when they see your brand? Employees should be rewarded for attaining and exceeding brand performance. Many companies have what might be called "Brand Commandments" or "The Guiding Principles". This is an excellent exercise to build the brand as a fully integrated part of your company's culture. Here are some principles and guidelines of companies that I have worked with.

- Incorporate a positive attitude.
- Customers come first – always.



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- Employees make the difference and demonstrate excellence.
- Integrity – we deal with our customers honestly and fairly.
- Communication – we promote an environment that foster open and effective communication throughout all levels.
- We form partnerships with our community.
- We are team players.
- We embrace change.
- We maximize shareholder value.

Here's a question that might help you define your brand concepts. Incorporate this exercise in a team meeting and to help all representatives fully understand what your brand represents.

- Describe your company if it were perfect.
- What is your company really like?
- In reality our environment is _____.
- Are there any obstacles that get in the way of what we might describe as perfect?
- What is different about the way we think?
- What do we need to do to create a perfect company?
- How easy are we to do business with?

Strive for excellence in all of these areas and if there is one that needs work, set out goals and expectations immediately. Competition is stiff and your brand is critical. Remember that whenever you wear, send, or represent you are an extension of your company.



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