

Branding: Outline of Terms and Definitions

By Bruce McTague

The “Big Four”

Brand:

A brand is a functional product or service that has earned emotional value. I believe you cannot build a brand (only the marketplace or users can). An organization can certainly build products or services and culturally can create an environment which can foster the creation of a brand. But in the beginning it is consistent delivery of functional products and organizational behavior (culture & actions) which ultimately creates the “brand.” That and repeat purchase or ongoing customer relationships (which are indicative of some satisfaction).

Nothing creates a brand faster than a great product supported by great service. Nothing kills a brand faster than a bad product or service.

Brand Value:

Brand value is “more transactions at a higher margin.” (or simply “I may be a higher cost to you but worth it.”)

Ultimately I believe unless the organization is a low cost provider that an organization is seeking to create brand value. Consistent delivery of a product or service, and key organizational behaviors, inevitably create some perceptions and expectations building to brand value.

That Brand Value translates into more transactions/interactions (people want to use or be associated with the organization’s products/services) at a higher price (people are willing to pay more). Publix Supermarkets is an excellent example. Publix customers are willing to drive by other alternatives and pay a higher average price simply to gain the Publix experience.

All companies either seek some version of Brand Value or accept themselves as a commodity.

Brand Alignment:

Brand Alignment is identifying that thread that links the management vision through organization core competency (what it is the organization creates and does best) all the way through to end employee behavior.

The best organizations are synced in its vision focus and behavioral actions leading to more efficient organizational behavior and ultimately creating the largest brand value.

When an organization is aligned aspirationally, emotionally and functionally it insures the Leader’s words are not simply seen as rhetoric and the organization is doing the day-to-day things contributing to the Leaders vision.

Positioning:

This is a statement which outlines specifically how we want the consumer to think of the product/service. It is a succinct statement capturing the functional core competency, the reason to believe this competency and the end user benefit the competency generates all of which makes the company/brand distinct (superior when possible but focused & distinct at minimum)

Example format:

Only insert company or brand does functional core competency here (how 'x' company meets user need) to insert specific user need met (this is the user end benefit) better because insert the focused reason to believe here (why people should believe 'x' company can do the competency).

Example:

PetSafe offers responsible pet owners peace of mind and a sense of accomplishment (self-satisfaction) with safe and innovative products that promote greater harmony between the loving, responsible pet owner and his pet.

OTHER KEY WORDS:

Brand Identity (a derivation of Brand):

This is the identity of the organization or product/service. An organization creates a variety of perceptions and attitudes in the marketplace over time. This mosaic of perceptions is created by how the world interacts with the organization, people, products & services. All of these touch points end up creating an identity for the organization.

Brand Essence (some people call it the Brand Vision):

Marines is "Elite Warrior." Orkin was "Friendly Killer." Oscar Mayer is "the joy of a childhood experience."

I prefer a shorter essence statement (some people write a paragraph). The Essence statement is a more visionary statement of higher order purpose. This statement captures the aspirational benefit generated by the organization's core competency - but must remain grounded in the functional aspect or runs the risk of becoming meaningless to the internal organization.

Brand Character (sometimes called the Brand Personality):

This should be a colorful paragraph highlighting the facets of the personality of brand product/service. If this is a product/service within a company portfolio of products/services this character statement should at minimum contain elements of the overarching brand characteristics (so it remains part of the "family). This is often written as a person.

It is NOT just a list of different adjectives.

This character definition will define the construct for messaging and tone/feel decisions. A great Character definition will define the different "voices" the organization, or brand, can speak in. In addition this character statement will define "compatible editorial environment" type decisions. Many people do not invest enough time in this meaningful exercise.

Example: An approachable advisor, coach, listener and guide with an uplifting attitude. Someone you trust with sharing inner fears and future hopes.

The Value Proposition:

This is very functional. Specific to the tangible "here is what the organization does and the value/benefit it offers the people who utilize the organization's products/services."

Maytag: builds durable long lasting appliances.
Duracell: batteries that last longer.
Crest: protects against cavities.

About Bruce McTague:

In a career spanning over 20 years, I've been involved with a wide range of industries including packaged goods, restaurant, pharmaceutical, retail, business-to-business and tourism. I won't bore you with all the details, but the bottom line is I have touched so many businesses across so many categories the headline for my career should probably be "Collector of experiences and knowledge."

If you would like some additional work experience details and see what a number of people have said about me, visit my [LinkedIn Profile](#) my blog, [Enlightened Conflict](#) or contact me directly by [email](mailto:bruce@brucemctague.com) at bruce@brucemctague.com.