



ITS ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

## DON'T SELL THE STEAK, SELL THE SIZZLE – SPICING UP THE BRAND!

In the book “**It’s not how good you are, it’s how good you want to be**”, the author recounts that when Victoria Beckham was a teenager she’d already decided she was going to be a household name and she set herself the goal of becoming even bigger and better-known than Persil, at that time the UK’s leading brand of washing powder. Laugh at it as you may, it was that single-minded drive and determination, coupled with over-riding ambition and imagination that got her where she is today - - a household name in her own right and the driving force behind the Beckham brand.

Organisations know the importance of branding. Just like the Beckhams we have entire departments dedicated to it and people specifically employed to manage The Brand. But lets ensure that we really understand what a brand is, beginning with what it isn’t. It is not a logo, nor is it a slogan, nor a clever by-line and neither is it a product. Yet many people confuse these words with The Brand. But the brand is far less tangible. A brand is about creating subliminal feelings and responses whenever it is referenced. And depending on what the brand is, those feelings can be either positive or negative. Take the swastika as an example. It is the oldest cross and emblem in the world. It forms a combination of four "L's" standing for Luck, Light, Love and Life. It has been found in ancient Rome and Greece, on Buddhist idols and on Chinese coins dated 315 B.C.. Then Hitler got hold of it and all that has been forgotten. The universally high regard in which the swastika was held as a good luck token has been utterly and emphatically corrupted and its original meaning and symbolism destroyed. It is no longer associated with ancient religions and goodness and hope but instead invokes an emotive response forever associated with Nazi Germany and the holocaust. The Swastika brand is not the insignia but what it represents.

With that very clear example of how branding can so define a thing as to completely obscure one image and utterly replace it with another we can see that branding is deeply anchored in psycho-sociology. It takes into account both tangible and intangible **attributes**, the functional and emotional benefits, which comprise the beliefs and qualities that we recall when we think about the brand in its context. The **value** of a brand resides in the desired reception of those promises that the product or service will deliver.

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As with the chillingly successful re-branding of the Swastika by the Third Reich, clearly, this can be an unpleasant revocation. The value then becomes the avoidance of an unpleasant experience – a conscious rejection of that brand and all it represents..

Organisations know that unless their brand stands out, unless it has a unique selling position and a positive image, no-one will buy into it. And it is the same with people. We are all CEO's of our own companies -- **Me Inc.** And to be competitive in business you have to ensure that you are successfully marketing your own unique brand. Ask yourself this question. What is it about my product or service does that makes it completely different? If the answer is 'I don't know' then it's time you did. Time to develop YOUR brand!

How do you do it? Well its important to know precisely who and what you are. Victoria Beckham knew and she used that self-belief to accentuate what she had and make it work for her. Branding is all about visibility – grabbing attention and holding it. This is what the big companies do well. A new industry buzz phrase is 'love tokens' – brands so familiar and so much a part of the fabric of our lives that our loyalty and love for them is deeply ingrained and almost unquestionable. Think Coke, McDonalds, Toyota, Colgate. Can you imagine a world without them? Of course not – that's how well-loved they are and how successful their global branding has been. So how do you set about selling yourself just as successfully and without their big marketing budgets?

Start by looking around and seeing how others have done it. A number of people around town have this well under control. Robert Masitara comes to mind. Love him or hate him he managed one of the best branding exercises I have seen in this market. Remember the big spread in YOU magazine about Botswana's social wedding of the year? It was specifically orchestrated in order to promote his brand regionally and in a hugely positive light. Ok, the brand may have taken a few knocks in recent months but each time it does, his machine counteracts with a good news story and at the end of the day he remains a brand many would consider buying into.

A brand, personal or otherwise, is not about delivery but about a promise of delivery. It's about hype and hope so it requires you to walk the walk and talk the talk. Say what you mean, mean what you say and make it believable! Find opportunities to showcase your unique selling points. Take the stage in whatever form to demonstrate what you can do and who you are. It is about selling and marketing yourself so that you are more valuable than the next person. Finding out what is sexy and smart and flaunting it. Turning yourself into an irresistible brand. And if you're in any doubt, ask yourself which is more instantly recognisable today from Britain to Barbados, Brazil to Botswana – Persil washing powder or Brand Beckham? There's no contest, is there? Its about the sizzle, not the steak and it never hurts to Spice it up a bit!

