

Your organizational brand: Crisis or credibility?

Elizabeth Smithson, a journalist at Branding Magazine and author of “What is Branding and Why Is It Important for Your Business?,” points out that branding “is a way of distinguishing yourself from the competitors and clarifying what it is you offer that makes you the better choice. Your brand is built to be a true representation of who you are as a business, and how you wish to be perceived.” Companies should be keenly aware that attitude, appearance and overall behavior of all staff — from receptionists to senior management — are directly related to the organization’s brand and how clients perceive the total enterprise. It is difficult for a business to appear professional, credible, trustworthy and successful if its staff does not reflect that brand.

It is vitally important that all levels of staff strive to project a sense of pride, be knowledgeable of quality customer service strategies and company policies/procedures, demonstrate a willingness to help, communicate effectively and present an appearance that represents the company in a professional manner.

Consider the following scenarios:

- Have you ever walked into an office and had to wait until the front desk employee finished her personal call, stopped reading a magazine or ended a side conversation before acknowledging your presence?
- Can you recall phoning a company for information about a product or service and receiving a cold and curt “Hello?” from a voice that projected, “I’m busy. Why are you interrupting

me?” rather than a pleasant “Good morning” from a voice that suggested, “We are so glad you called; how may we help you?”

- What about the abundance of sloppy, inappropriate and in-poor-taste attire worn by so many in today’s workplace? Perhaps the idea of “never getting a second chance to make a first impression” has fallen by the wayside.

Do those situations read like extreme exaggerations? On the contrary, these examples are just a few of the unprofessional, brand-impacting behaviors that occur every day in many businesses.

The importance of staff transmitting a company brand to the public and clients has increased and continues to gain momentum. No matter the job titles individuals hold, in some way, they are expressing the overall brand of the firm, conveying either a positive or negative perception.

Competition and the need for quality service and products have become drastically more significant, and organizations must change to meet those needs. Businesses should consider all components of their brand and analyze how perception of the company is being impacted, then move forward to plan necessary changes for enhancement.

Here are a few options for management to consider:

- Conduct a staff training needs assessment. Provide professional development training programs appropriate to those needs.
- Review policies and procedures to identify those that may need to be updated or totally changed.



- Convey positive reinforcement, offer praise and recognition, and — most importantly — be a role model for desired behaviors. For example, when it comes to dress and appearance, employees often take visual cues on appropriate attire from managers. If you are a manager, check yourself: Is your image professional and representative of the brand you desire for your company?

- Recruit and hire the right people in the right roles from the very start. Also, continue to help current staff grow by developing the necessary skills that will add value to the company brand.

- Invest in employee engagement strategies. Design processes that will improve employee pride and satisfaction.

In today’s competitive global marketplace, your organization’s brand is of vital importance. Assess whether it is promoting credibility, integrity, professionalism and internal/external customer satisfaction. Is it driving new business, building awareness and growing profits? Or is the company brand in a state of crisis?

Here’s the bottom line: To quote Smithson once again, “Branding is important not only because it is what makes a memorable impression on consumers, but also because it allows your customers and clients to know what to expect from your company.”

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