

Financial Focus

Audit and Accounting Matters for Schools

In this issue of McLean Delmo's Financial Focus we take a look at branding. While not normally considered an accounting issue, brand is an important part of the business mix for any organisation.

For schools, your brand is particularly important not just from a business perspective, but because it becomes part of an ongoing legacy for all past and present students. They become your brand ambassadors every time they answer the question "Where did you go to school?".

At a recent Breakfast Briefing, McLean Delmo Marketing Manager, Leah Taylor, discussed her ideas on branding. Here is a summary of the key points.

Creating a great brand is about telling a great story

Creating a great brand is about telling a great story consistently and repetitively to a defined target market. And really great branding is about telling that story so convincingly that over time your brand story becomes part of your customers' story. So creating a great brand is about making a connection with your clients, customers or stakeholders and – in time – creating brand loyalty which is pure marketing gold.

The quote below from Martin Kornberger in his book "Brand Society" sums up this core theme:

"Branding turns a commodity into a cultural entity. People write the scripts of their lives using brands."

So when you start thinking about your brand, begin with these questions:

- ❖ What is my story?
- ❖ What is the story of my organisation?
- ❖ What can I do to get my clients or customers to remember my story and to become part of the story?

Why bother with branding?

It's easy to be cynical about branding and marketing in general. Not everyone has the budget for marketing bells and whistles and large scale advertising campaigns. Many organisations have dabbled in some branding activity in the past – perhaps with mixed success. But the benefits of branding are clear:

- ❖ Brands sell products and services
- ❖ Brands connect you with your market
- ❖ Consumers need a reason to believe in you or your product, so branding can help them make choices
- ❖ A positive brand experience can create loyalty and trust
- ❖ Brands create value for your business
- ❖ Brands define who you are and what you do – but they also define who your customers are and what they do

Learning lessons from great brands

When thinking about your brand, one of the best things you can do is to look at successful brands and learn some lessons about what works.

It would only take you a moment to come up with a shortlist of some of Australia's best known brands.

Such is the power of these brands that you could instantly spout their tagline or belt out their jingle. These brands are engrained in our memories and entrenched in our history. And even though many of them are no longer Australian owned, we still consider them our own and remain protective of them.

Whether it's Allen's lollies or the patriotic pull of Vegemite – these two brands were the taste of childhood for many Australians and have become part of our stories. Chocoholics continue to unite behind Cadbury – one of the most recognisable brands in Australia – in no small part due to a huge investment in advertising spend.

The vision of Australia is sold through RM Williams and Akubra which remain authentic and true to the elements that are unique to these organisations. And Qantas aims to maintain loyalty to its brand by remaining acutely aware of and swiftly reactive to the promotional activity of their competitors.

Perhaps you can recognise other successful brands that have become a part of your own story – or part of the ethos of your organisation – and work out how to emulate similar branding success.

Tips for creating a great brand

- ❖ Be clear on your organisational goals and authentic to company or association objectives
- ❖ Develop your story and communicate consistent key messages
- ❖ Know your customers and their perceptions, specifically through ongoing test marketing and feedback
- ❖ Consider all brand elements – remember that brand is more than just a pretty logo
- ❖ Deliver quality and relevant products and services that meet your market's expectations
- ❖ Invest in the brand in terms of dollars (if your marketing budget allows) and certainly in time spent planning the future of your brand and implementing the elements of your brand strategy
- ❖ Be aware that brand and reputation are linked and there are many factors outside of your control that can negatively impact your brand
- ❖ Seek and obtain great advice from a marketing specialist and a graphic designer and listen closely to their recommendations
- ❖ Think long term and be flexible – particularly in response to competitive pressures.

Conclusion

Branding is a great way to tell your story and make your customers proud. Give your clients, customers and stakeholders a reason to believe and make them part of the story. In time you will benefit from the brand loyalty that you need to boost the profits and cash flows of your organisation.

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About McLean Delmo

McLean Delmo is a dynamic professional services organisation offering advice to all types of businesses and individuals. Our team consists of progressive accountants, auditors, financial planners, mortgage brokers as well as tax and other specialists.

Our focus is to help create, maximise and protect wealth for all our clients - be they small, medium or large.

Our purpose built offices are located in Hawthorn, on the fringe of Melbourne's CBD. While the majority of our clients are from in and around Melbourne, we are increasingly involved in interstate and international work.

Our membership of Kreston International, a worldwide network of experienced, independent accounting and business advisory firms means we can look after our clients throughout Australian and in all parts of the world.

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