

## The Power of Branding

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It's all a matter of perception; blondes have more fun, a gentleman never wears brown in town, the old school tie, they're just a bunch of tired old clichés so why do they exist in the first place? Because we need them; we all need to differentiate ourselves in some way from the crowd, we have to stamp our individuality on the world or, in many cases, we have to show that we are part of a select club....it's all branding!

So what makes a brand and is one better than the next? Again, perception is the key. Take Rolex and Tudor, both are timepiece brands manufactured by the same company, the main difference in the product in my perception, is that one is officially certified and the other is not. This difference to a manufacturer that subscribes to the highest possible standards in everything they do from engineering and design perspective is of little real consequence but how many people are aware of the Tudor brand?

A cache has been established for the Rolex brand that sets them apart from the vast majority of other watch producers. It is a mantle of excellence they carry. They are seen at high profile, precision-sporting events as sponsors, they have a client list that is amongst the most envied. So what of Tudor? The same excellence prevails and the same attention to detail is applied to the product - the only thing missing is the brand.

Perception doesn't just happen; it is engineered, created and consistently nurtured. If you have the best thing in the world but fail to tell people about it, they will never know. Then there is the manner in which you tell them. What point is there in telling people about your brand if they can't afford to enjoy it? If they can't afford it they will want it all the more. Even if it is unattainable to them, this fact will enhance the value to those that can.

All of this is fascinating but what does it mean and how can it possibly have any relevance in the IT channel? One needs to carefully foster a perception that is dear to their objectives and ensure that the message that goes out to the respective public is consistent and cumulative in its effect.

If a vendor or reseller wants to set his stall to be at the top end of the market because he wants his offering to command a premium he must convince buyers that it is worth paying the extra. This need not necessarily be the case, how does one tell the difference between a high profile branded T-shirt from a non-branded one? Well? Are you getting it now? Both are probably manufactured in the same area of the Far East, probably in the same factory and yet one will command a price up to 15 times that of the other.

Brands are important as you can see. They are the corporate assets upon which a price is very difficult to put. They are the personality of the producer and, as such, align themselves quite naturally with those wishing to be associated with other like-minded souls.

Your brand is what you are. You need to take very great care in how you create it, position it and market it if you want it to succeed and stand the test of time. Too many people underestimate the power and value of a strong brand - I just need a logo they cry, attaching little real value to its long-term worth.

If you want to sell volume products into a large market, think about it. Ever heard of a Mars bar? One of the greatest brands on earth and it sells for pennies - a lot of them. I think the Mars Corporation take their brand seriously, don't you?

Be seen

As with all things, it's not just a matter of what you do but the way that you do it also makes a big difference. In the IT Channel, there are many mediums for taking your message/brand to market, some more costly than others. Whatever method you choose PLEASE ensure that you are consistent.

Have a look at the press you read, the chances are you will see plenty of ads with a million words of poor copy, bad product shots and propositions aplenty - none of which will be immediately evident. Why? Because those that are responsible for approving them have A) little or no marketing knowledge B) still less do they understand brand, brand presence and continuity. Think about it, break the mould, make a point!

Whenever you expose your brand be sure that it is a way that has a compound effect such that each market buck you spend has a cumulative effect to maximise your budget and, whatever you do, get your proposition right. Keep it short, keep it simple and you have a chance of success, try to fill the page with all the stuff you 'think' is important and you will lose your customer in an instant.

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