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Brand-Aids™ are practical, easy-to-use tools you can apply to brand building and messaging through ads, PR, literature, websites, and so forth. Just like Band-Aids® stop the bleeding from annoying cuts, Brand-Aids stop the pain and cost of branding confusion.

Brand-Aids #5—Close the loop for brand success



True branding success means having consistency at all touch points of marketing. To achieve your brand essence, connect the loop at all levels by seeing your brand, hearing your brand and speaking your brand.

*By John Favalo, CBC, Managing Partner
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Everything feels right. The market you're in is growing. The sales force is clicking with a killer USP. Business is good. Heck, even the new ad campaign and snappy slogan are getting high marks. But, does all this mean you've got brand value to build on?

Integrated marketing and communications are the keys to successful branding. Big news, right? But, what's this integration thing really mean in a practical sense?

Well, remember—your brand is more than the clever tagline of the week. More

than the most powerful statement ever written. Even more than an innovative product, on-time delivery, service-with-a-smile. Alive in every great brand—brands like HP®, Kodak®, Jeep®—is a spirit...a cohesive spirit that customers feel. And can remain loyal to. Ever feel like your brand is missing that spirit? Like it's lost in space? Then close the loop for true branding success and see your brand, hear your brand, speak your brand.

See your brand

Some of the world's top brands spend boatloads on brand standards manuals

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think something was wrong if you saw the Nike Swoosh® pointing down? Or saw a FedEx® box that said, “The GLOBE on time”? Or a Ford® logo in red?



“Your brand is more than the clever tagline of the week.”

You don't necessarily need to spend big bucks on a branding manual. I've seen brand manuals that cost four-figures do as effective a job as those costing six-figures. You do need to spend energy and resources creating consistent brand expression across all touch-points.

The best example of “seeing” a brand is by “breaking it.” Imagine finding a broken Coke® bottle. Could you figure out it was a Coke bottle by looking at the chunks of green-grey glass? Couldn't you reconstruct the broken bottle in your mind...the curvy shape flowing into a broad base? And couldn't you also reconstruct thoughts, feelings, and sensations about Coke the product...just by “seeing” the bottle?*

Make sure your brand and its essence or value can be seen. And seen consistently through things like shape, color, texture, packaging, logo, and so forth. Police it. Remember, the value of the Coke brand exceeds by far the value of all of Coca-Cola's tangible assets.

Hear your brand

Harley-Davidson® is one of the strongest brands in the world. What brand do you know of that measures loyalty by the number of logos tattooed on its customers? How's that for “seeing” a brand? But certainly one of the most memorable things about a Harley is the sound it makes. That's really hearing your brand.

*Example attributed to the book *Brand Sense* by Martin Lindstrom.



We've got two words for the person who first said “leveraging synergies.”

talk human 

Businesses don't talk to businesses. People talk to people. Which is why EMA Group B2B does things differently. We help you communicate with businesspeople as people who happen to work in business. Clearly, emotionally, and honestly. If you'd like to have an “offline” about “widening your bandwidth,” we're probably not for you. On the other hand, if you'd like to talk so customers listen, call Stephanie Crockett at 1.800.724.0289 ext. 4355 or visit us at www.talkhuman.com.



But you rumble, “My brand doesn’t make a noise. It doesn’t even whisper.” Okay, but who or what makes noise about your brand? Does your call center or tele-marketing firm? Do your sales people? Does the music that you play as part of presentations or at sales meetings? And are people hearing the same tune (message)?

How clearly is your brand communicating its points and are the points consistent? Does your brand “sound” unique and different from competitors? If your brand represents excitement or action in some fashion, say like a machining center or saw blade, is the sound of your brand voice reflective?

You know what happens when you hear a catchy jingle over and over. It sticks in your mind. Sometimes it won’t leave you alone. You don’t want your brand to be a pain in the butt...you just want it to be a bug in the ear. So remember that your brand has a voice and that you can control what it sounds like. Speak your brand

You’ve heard about the “elevator speech.” It’s that 20-second brand pitch you give to a very-important-someone during the ride up to the c-suite. You also know how hard those speeches are to create. Well, they’re even tougher to synchronize. I don’t know about you, but I’ve seen scores of little laminated cards, supposedly carried by people who are paid to “speak the brand,” and supposedly intended to remind those people of what they should say about the brand. Such cards often contain Mission Statements, Vision, Beliefs, Values, and so forth. All these are important and valid in business planning, but “speaking the brand” should never get this complicated.

HP’s brand line is simple—“Invent.” If you worked for HP, do you think you could come up with an elevator speech, even if you had only that word to work with? Do you think that 20 elevator speeches given by 20 HP folks would have a similar ring if they all started off with the idea behind “Invent?”

You need to make your brand’s selling points and philosophy clear so the people who deliver brand messages can “speak the brand” just as clearly. They need to

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understand and speak your brand’s language. Easier said than done? Agreed. But here is a tool that helps you speak the language of your brand effectively and consistently. It’s called the Key Word Pool.

The Key Word Pool contains a group of words that are particularly relevant brand-wise. Depending upon the subject of the message, your messengers can use the Key Word Pool as a resource and as inspiration. The word pool can be shallow or deep...with just a few key words or several. Here’s a Key Word Pool my company used for a client:



The word pool is used throughout the enterprise to shape messages. It is used as a foundation for all communications and helps internal and external resources “speak the brand” accurately and consistently. And successfully because you can find one or more of these words in every ad, news release, presentation, or speech (even in an elevator) that this company delivers. So speak your brand, hear your brand, and see your brand. And remember this Brand-Aid when it feels like your brand’s essence isn’t connected throughout the loop.