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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 #6—To build asset value of brands, ...get engaged!

*By John Favalo, CBC, Managing Partner
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Engage. It's a word not used enough in brand building. Yet it could be the most important one for all you who crave the benefits of strong brands.

The words I often hear associated with building brands are attract, interest and involve. These are good words, mind you. And they're very important in the job of building brand value because they're all about getting people...well...attracted to, interested in, and involved with a brand. Engaging people in a brand is way, way different, though. To see what I mean, let's look at the words in question.

Attract, according to Webster's Dictionary: to get attention, distract, shift a look; to draw another by exerting a compelling influence.

Interest: a feeling that accompanies or causes special attention to an object or class of objects; to induce or persuade attention.

Involve: to oblige to take part; to relate closely; to stimulate participation.

As applied to brand building, the importance of these words (more correctly the strategies and actions that these words represent) is obvious. We want to

attract people to our brand, interest them in it and get them involved with it. But these still are not enough to build higher value. That comes with loyalty. Loyalty and engagement are very closely related.

Engage, according to the dictionary: to attract and hold by importance or power;

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engage: (v) to attract and hold by importance or power; to interlock with.

to interlock with. See the difference? Don't we all want our brand to attract and hold customers?

I fell in love with a woman many, many years ago. We were attracted to each other, we were interested in the same things and we were involved deeply with each other's lives. But, when we became engaged our relationship changed big time. At that point, we promised ourselves to each other. We declared mutual loyalty. We agreed to a future together. So, wouldn't you rather be brand-engaged with customers? Enjoying a long-term, mutually profitable relationship? Interlocked and held together by the importance of the value exchange? If lots and lots of customers were engaged with your brand, do you think its value on the balance sheet would increase?

I know that all sounds rather emotional, so to put it into a more rational, business planner's terms: in order to reach the ultimate goal—building brand value—a fundamental strategy is to engage valued



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

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customers. The tactics? You guessed them: attract, interest and involve.

Okay, as long as we're in a planning mode, how might we think about the makeup of your brand's attributes or characteristics to better match them up with strategy and tactics? How do we plan a brand for customer engagement?

Think CX3.

No, CX3 isn't a new import sports car. It represents three C-words that can make doe-eyes between brands and customers.

Create

Brands need to be creative. Attracting attention is part of that, but to engage someone successfully you need to approach her or him creatively. I asked for my wife's hand by giving her my diamond pinky ring (is that a "Sopranos" move or what?) at a New Year's Eve party with friends. I had no money to buy a real diamond but giving her my own ring did the job. Lesson: Build creativity into your brand's personality and the way your brand interacts with customers. People are not only attracted to the creativity but they are taken by it emotionally. And remember: brands don't need big budgets to be creative. At my special moment in time, getting engaged cost me exactly zero.

Connect

Great brand planning is like one of those computer dating services...where you find your soulmate. Only in this case, soulmates in commerce. Dating services ask about someone's likes and dislikes and use modeling to identify the possible connections between people. Do the same. Model your brand values against the profiles of your valued customers. Identify where your brand connects with needs, wants, likes, problems, emotions. This is the way to accelerate higher interest. If you can't find rational and emotional connections between your brand and customers, you won't find those economic soulmates that make for long, mutually profitable relationships.

Commit

Getting engaged is making a commitment alright. Engaging customers requires a brand to commit as well, in the form of enhancing performance, keeping promises, delivering satisfaction, and so

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on. Look for ways to express your brand's commitment. A diamond ring expresses the commitment in the social world. In our business world, brands can commit with a money-back guarantee, on-time delivery, error-free billing, price protection, always in-stock on high-volume SKUs, and so forth. Look around. I bet you can find plenty of ways to demonstrate your brand's commitment.



Be brand-engaged with customers, and you'll enjoy a long-term, mutually profitable relationship.

In another light, commitment is important because customers, like people, can be fickle. Stay committed to your own brand values and deliver them unfailingly, time and again, to your economic soulmates...your valued customers. Your relationship will grow, deepen, and become richer over time. As will the value of your brand as a business asset. All things that bring sunny skies, chirping bluebirds and communal bliss. Oh, by the way, being faithful doesn't hurt either.