



**ERIC MOWER
AND ASSOCIATES**

ATLANTA, GA
BUFFALO, ROCHESTER,
SYRACUSE, AND ALBANY, NY
CHARLOTTE, NC

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 #8— To deliver more effective brand messages, understand your brand's "solar system."

By charting the audiences that orbit your core brand promise, you can identify how well understood your brand is, assess brand value, and develop brand connections with rocket-like speed and accuracy.

By John Favalo, CBC, Managing Partner
Eric Mower and Associates, Group B2B

According to brand experts Lynn Upshaw and Earl Taylor, a "...brand is a central set of associated meanings and benefits, whose orbit stretches from the company's strategic core, throughout its people and partners, enveloping its customers and out to its far perimeters of influence."

When I read this for the first time, images of solar systems flashed. You've seen them. Mobiles of the sun and planets hanging and bobbing from a ceiling or the illustrations in science books. But as I thought about this image and put it in

the context of a brand, I saw the "brand solar system" quite differently.

At the center of the solar system is the sun, the source of life. Analogous to the sun in the branding sense is the brand essence or single most important promise (we talked about the latter in our last Brand-Aid...the one that dealt with Brand Architecture). This, too, is the source of life for the brand. Examples: The "ultimate driving experience" of BMW. The "freedom" of Harley-Davidson. The "think different" of Apple. The "computing power" of Intel.

Brand-Aids #8...
continued on page 2

Talk to us:

John Favalo, CBC
Managing Partner

E-mail

jfavalo@mower.com

Phone:

315.466.1000

Address

Eric Mower and Associates
Group B2B
500 Plum Street
Syracuse, New York 13204

www.mower.com

talk human  SM

www.mower.com

Brand-Aids #8...
continued from page 1

Then as I visualized this brand solar system I saw various brand audiences orbiting the core brand promise...the people or constituencies that should connect with the brand or that the brand must influence or engage.

Take a look at the Brand Solar System illustration on page three. This is taken from an actual brand guidelines document for a very successful brand in the building and construction markets.

We can see that the center of the brand solar system, its sun, is the brand essence (client confidentiality prevents me from providing you with the actual core brand essence) or brand promise. This is Upshaw and Taylor's "strategic core" and the life of the brand. Within this core is what makes the brand meaningful and different to its audiences.

In the illustration, and oftentimes in business and brand life, the audiences

nearest to the core know the brand best. Employees should have a first-hand grasp of the brand, its culture and characteristics. They "live the brand" and should know what makes "their brand" different from competitors...how the business delivers brand value...how it expresses brand personality, and so on. The strength of this knowledge and familiarity remains fairly robust among channel partners like manufacturers' reps, sales agents and distributors. These people deal with the business every day and ought to be able to feel authentic "brand experiences."

These audiences are in the best position to, at the very least, sketch the brand essence, foundational blocks, personality and even emotional connections to the brand. However, as we move farther from the strategic core of the brand, the weaker the connections become, especially at the emotional level.

At these distant points, people tend to connect with a brand on more familiar,



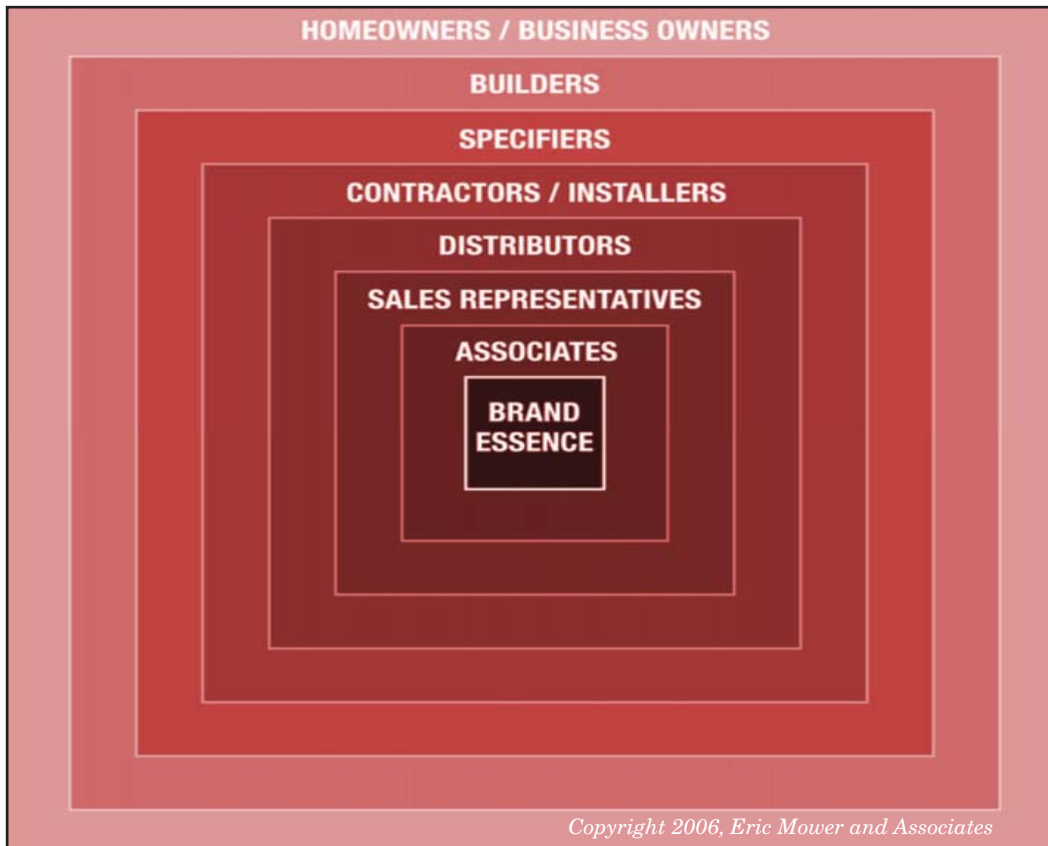
We've got two words for the person who first said "leveraging synergies."

talk human  SM

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.



Example of a 'Brand Solar System'



The center, or sun, of the “Brand Solar System” is the brand essence or single most important promise. Audiences nearest the core know the brand best and can “feel the warmth” of the brand. The farther away from the core an audience is, the more difficult it is for them to feel the glow and connect with the brand.

rational and tangible grounds. They relate to brands in the context of their business lives. Consequently, this plays out in how user audiences evaluate product or service performance. The literalness of what a product does or how a customer service representative answers the phone more easily shapes brand perception for a user. Emotional benefits get pushed way back and are not easily characterized consciously. That’s why these days brand experiences are becoming a more actively managed part of the marketing function—they can be very important in shaping opinions not only on the tangible side but also on the emotional side, too.

So, if you’re trying to understand how well understood your brand is, assess brand value among various audiences, or develop brand connections/experiences, use the “solar system” model as your guide. You can measure the level of brand knowledge and feel on the basis of each

ring. You can study the differences that exist in each. You can assess the strength of the core brand value. And where that strength begins to wane.

What’s more, you can establish your “sun” as the core brand essence or promise and identify the audiences or constituencies that are closest and can “feel the warmth” of the brand. Remember that the farther away from this core an audience is the more difficult it is for them to feel the glow. So you can develop brand and brand experience delivery strategies that enable audiences to connect. For instance, you may see the need to create ideas that warm those “outer rings” in ways that drive a more emotional, rather than tangible connection.

Through all of this you must be sure of the space your brand occupies within its “solar system.” That way, you can plan your brand’s “space travel” with rocket-like speed and accuracy.