

How to Use Brand as a Business Strategy to Drive Growth

The key driver to top-line growth is marketing, it needs to be rooted in brand

- You can capture attention...without having to over-pay for it.
 - When we start brand development with a business, we conduct a competitive audit. The results of this audit usually reveal that a majority of businesses operating in the same industry look, sound and act the same. Language around performance, service, price, sound like white noise to your target client. In this sea of sameness, how do you capture their attention?
 - You can try to pay for it with SEM - buy ad words, rank higher in searches. This can be cost prohibitive for many small and medium businesses with lean budgets.
 - You can try to promo your way into it by charging less or giving deep discounts, but this is just a spiral down the commoditized drain.
 - Because you have a brand, you can play a different game that captures attention without having to overpay for it. You can create a personality that disrupts their current belief of your industry. And then you lean into this personality.
 - Example that best explain this:
 - Southwest Airlines. Discount airline, but it has a positive image. They have gone all in living their brand. The personality of the brand supercedes the fact that you don't even get to pick your seat, or get a drink or food.
 - Use your Brand as the filter by which to define your marketing and communication outreach. Resist the urge to do it like everyone else is doing it. You have earned the right to play differently.
- You can generate a powerful word-of-mouth engine.
 - WOM is still the most productive marketing channel if you give people something to talk about. The memorable part, the part that gets people talking is the impact of what you do.
 - This is what we call the "and". "They did a good job AND..." It is this "and" that becomes the differentiator that separates you from the competition. Now that you have a brand, you have defined your "and". This is generally articulated by the impact or purpose you are delivering that is articulated in your Brand Story. This is solving a tension that improves the lives of your customer. This is what makes you memorable and keeps you top-of-mind when someone asks for a reco or referral.
 - Clearly articulate your "and" and make sure this is incorporated into your internal brand so that everyone is operating according to your "and". This consistency is needed to solidify the memorability. It can't just be something you do every once in a while. It needs to be all the time.
- You can better manage risk.
 - One of the biggest challenges many of our coaching clients face is in taking the responsibility for making the decisions. This can feel overwhelming when you feel the decision relies solely on you and its fate on your shoulders. This can be paralyzing for many. Which can force some to make what they deem as safe decisions...or worse...they make no decisions at all.
 - Your brand can operate as your third party proxy by which you filter your decisions. You do this by asking yourself "would this build our brand or erode our brand?" And though this may seem subjective to people's opinions, it is actually subjective when the brand is well defined.
 - When you have a strong brand, decisions around investments in marketing, adding products and services, and expansion into new revenue streams or even geographics are informed by what will be best for the brand...not just the business.
 - What this helps to avoid are short-term, knee-jerk decisions that usually come from our reactions to the bottom line or competition. These are generally the riskiest decisions we make because we aren't thinking about the long-term ramifications. Sometimes you have to do what you have to do, and you certainly don't want to be delusional or put your head in the sand. But chasing short-term wins is hardly ever sustainable.
 - If you evaluate these decisions based on what is best for the brand, you will likely see that these short-term decisions can put the brand at risk. And when you put the brand at risk, you compromise your competitive advantage.
 - What can happen is people will claim they can't evolve or modernize their business because it violates the brand. This could look like a refusal to shift to mass communications versus 1:1, or advertising in general when you have been more WOM, or modernizing the look, tone and feel of the visuals and copy. This is where we will remind people that brand is a living, breathing thing. It must mature and evolve as the world around it does.
- You can build trust, which generates pull.
 - Trust is built through consistent behavior. Both good or bad. A brand is your playbook for consistency. And when you embrace the playbook from the inside out, you show up as consistent which then leads to trust. Trust is the key to getting and retaining customers, ambassadorship and loyalty.
 - When you have trust, you generate pull. Everything operates more efficiently and productively when you are pulling versus pushing. Your marketing is more effective because your brand greases the skids helping people overcome the burden of proof more quickly. Your WOM travels faster because the consistency helps to amplify.
 - Trust is also critical in talent acquisition and retention. When you recruit through your brand, it attracts the right people for your culture. When they get to your company and the brand is as advertised, the trust is reinforced. This creates a more productive and content workforce.
 - When you do something wrong, people are more willing to forgive you as this is seen as more of a one-time thing than something systemic.

