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BEYOND THE BOTTLE
**Brand
It!**

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BRANDING: BEYOND THE BOTTLE

BY DONATELLA GIACOMETTI

TWO-TIME Olympic gold medalist, six-time MVP, record number of *Sports Illustrated* covers, and mega-deals with Hanes, Nike, Coke, and Rayovac—Michael Jordan has branded everything manly, from boxers to batteries.

But how do you turn a locker room legend into a prestige men's fragrance brand? Start with the question, "Mr. Jordan, what scents inspire you?"

The answer was impressive and included a memorable mix of basketball leather and golf course grass, fresh cut at dawn. Our client Givaudan, the world's leading fragrance and flavor house, captured, created, and communicated what smelled good to "His Airness" and went on to commercialize the best-selling men's cologne brand in history.

Putting the appeal and expense of employing an international icon aside, I share that case study with you because the analogy of marketing a cologne that jumps off a crowded retail shelf is similar to the challenge of branding bottled water.

Assuming that all the basics are in place, how does a colorless, odorless liquid in a container become so uniquely desirable that it inspires the customer to choose "it" over others?

BRAND PARADISE

Beyond the importance of choosing your name, creating your logo, placing your advertising, and distributing your product strategically—all critical factors in securing your brand position—there is something that goes deeper. To create and sustain a total

brand experience, you will need to make your brand so magnetic and desirable that price and convenience are barely factors in the purchasing decision. The result is a consumer that asks for your brand every time he wants to quench his thirst.

Sound like paradise?

Remarkably, any brand can reach this lucrative destination. Every brand can have a voice that is distinct from all others, uniquely its own. Every brand can have its place in the market that begins and ends with the consumer.

Starting now, consider the facts, claims, and perceptions surrounding your brand:

- First, enumerate the facts—those absolute truths that even your fiercest competitors would acknowledge as true about your brand.
- Next, write out your claims—those points that are open to interpretation but worth defending.
- Finally, outline your brand perceptions. This exercise illuminates where your brand and your customer merge in a relationship that goes beyond all rhyme or

reason and results in consumer loyalty.

Imagine this paradise of perceptions where all the touch points of your brand deliver on the same authentic promise every time and everywhere your message is shared. Obstacles are cleared, the story of your brand speaks to mutual interests, and a direct path leads to the heart, mind, and wallet of your customer.

facts
+
claims
+
perceptions
=

BRAND

THE POWER OF PERCEPTION

Lessons can be drawn from the world's power brands, such as Nike, Coca-Cola (two out of three for Michael Jordan), and American Express. Based on my independent, impartial research, all power brands have four attributes in common. When combined, those characteristics interact with the target consumer in ways that set the power brand above and beyond its competitors.

The customer always experiences the following when the suite of power brand qualities are in place:

- satisfaction
- aspiration
- lift
- esteem.

I have come to affectionately call this power combination S.A.L.E.

“S” IS FOR SATISFACTION

The consumer feels *satisfaction* by experiencing the focused message of your brand. Purity, freshness, health-related benefits: the special qualities that match the tastes of your end user are specific and customized to fit your brand. You will press the same satisfaction button every time.

“A” IS ASPIRATION

The desire to be like your brand is the ultimate in *aspiration*. Your consumer wants to be associated with your memorable message. She wants to participate in the prestige, craftsmanship, pride—or whatever chosen message you select to signal the extraordinary reward that comes with drinking your brand of water.

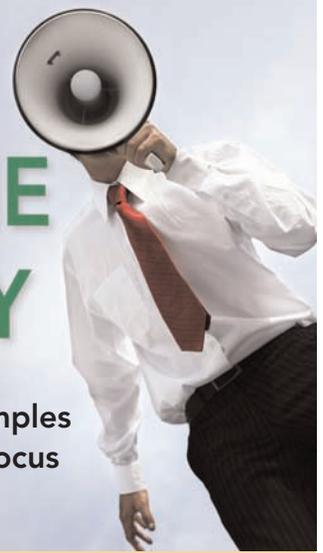
“L” IS THE LIFT

The sport, the meal, even the mundane contents of the shopping cart: Everything is *lifted* by the very presence of your brand. Your consumer is elevated by sharing in your brand, an experience he'll be happy to relive every time you press the lift power button.

“E” IS (EARNED) ESTEEM

Your consumer respects your values, reputation, and code of ethics. She holds your brand in the highest esteem. To achieve this attribute of a power brand requires diligence, commitment, and an aligned corporate culture. Push this button and you're sure to be rewarded.

VOICES FROM THE INDUSTRY



Following are a few examples of how IBWA members focus their branding efforts.

LIZ SCHEOPNER

Owner ■ Scheopner's Water Conditioning ■ Garden City, Kansas

For 28 years, Scheopner's has been "the neighbor down the street." The customer knows the brand and Scheopner's knows its customer.

Serving a 100-mile radius consisting of 13 counties in southwest Kansas, the company prides itself on being part of the local landscape. Community events, charitable giving, feel-good advertising, and commitment to service are brand hallmarks. Schoepner's is a family business that has made its brand part of its extended family of customers.

CHRIS "REVEREND" WARNER

President ■ Liquid Salvation ■ Reno, Nevada

"Pure Water For An Impure World" is the tagline of Liquid Salvation. The name, the tag, and the pin-up girl logo named Sally together create the unified brand experience that is unmistakably Liquid Salvation.

Founded by pro-athlete turned Hollywood stuntman Chris Warner, the company understands the value of entertainment and irreverent humor applied to the important reminder to drink lots of water; in this case Liquid Salvation, water so distinctly packaged that consumers "ask for the flask."

In its custom RV, the brand is on the road from music festivals to charity events to roller derby bouts. Liquid Salvation speaks the language of a customer who is part of the club/surf/ski/snow crowd, while reaching those who aspire to this young-at-heart lifestyle.

JIM KARRH

Chief Marketing Officer ■ Mountain Valley Spring Company
■ Hot Springs, Arkansas

For 130 years, Mountain Valley Spring Company has been bottling from a single spring nestled deep in the forests of Arkansas. The company's tagline, "A Singular Taste From A Single Spring," supports the authenticity of the brand and suggests a unique tasting experience.

Building on its heritage of serving generations of celebrities, U.S. presidents (13 in all), and American families, Mountain Valley Spring Company determined that an outstanding legacy was one of several elements needed to sustain a brand.

To reinforce the meaning of its brand, the company is involved in long-term partnerships with nonprofit causes that align with its brand values. In addition, product placements in carefully selected feature films and television programs expose the brand to a wide audience. An email excerpt from a happy customer says it all: "My family began drinking Mountain Valley Spring Water in the 1930s. We own a winery in Napa Valley, have lots of cave storage space...which we like to fill with 10 cases of glass 1 liter bottles, 10 cases of 16.9 ounce plastic sport bottles, and 15 5-gallon glass bottles twice a year."

Branding Job Aid

The task of creating a “brand” can seem overwhelming. To start the process, hand out copies of this job aid to the appropriate staff members. Schedule a meeting in which the sole focus is to brainstorm how to brand your product.

Enumerate the facts—List the absolute truths about your brand that even your fiercest competitors would acknowledge as true.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Write out your claims—those points that are open to interpretation but worth defending.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Outline your brand perceptions—the areas in which your brand and your customer merge in a relationship that goes beyond all rhyme or reason and results in consumer loyalty.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Describe your consumer/audience: _____

The S.A.L.E. Factor

Satisfaction: What are the special qualities of your brand that match the tastes of your customer? What is it about your brand that gives your customer satisfaction?

Aspiration: Why do consumers aspire to be associated with your brand’s message?

Lift: By purchasing your brand, consumers feel lifted (or elevated). What is it about the experience of buying your brand that makes consumers feel that way?

Esteem: What is it about your values, reputation, or code of ethics that encourages consumers to hold your brand in the highest esteem?

Price, placement, packaging, and promotion pale when compared to the attributes of power available to the brand that seriously accepts the contract the consumer makes with your brand.

ONE CUSTOMER AT A TIME

As we contemplate the creative and management demands of distinguishing your brand from others, I'd like to share with you a moment of fine dining:

The ritual is always the same: The waiter asks if you'd like to get started with something to drink—a glass of wine perhaps, or some bottled water. Sparkling or flat he inquires, never mentioning a name nor offering a choice from the beverage list.

The waiter then gestures the size of the bottle with two hands, which makes a liter appear to be the size of a large raccoon. The table is held hostage because the smaller bottle is not available, nor is the option for each guest to make a personal selection.

The large bottle arrives, sealed to ensure its

authenticity. Poured reverently and served without ice cubes, the brand is on the table. Standing cool in the candlelight, adorned by sliced lemon or lime, the product has become part of the experience, a key element in the evening's entertainment.

Yet, the dozens of nuances that would connect the brand one-on-one with the consumer are squandered. Yes, the restaurant has achieved its margin—the diner's basic instinct for quenching thirst is satisfied—but lost in the mix were the valuable opportunities for brand differentiation.

Innumerable opportunities surround you—from the gym to the convenience store, from the workplace to the movie theater—to make your brand of bottled water the one asked for by name. Now is the time to begin.

Donatella Giacometti is the chief brand officer for Ten Second World, Inc., a niche leader for brand expression based in New York; brand_marketing@tensecondworld.com.

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