

YOUR BRAND IS NOT YOUR LOGO!

A revealing discussion on one of the most common myths businesses have about branding

By Suzanne Tulien, Principal and Co-Founder of The Brand Ascension Group, LLC

This article is an excerpt from a series of article/chapters from the book “*The 6 Myths of Small Business Branding*,” by Suzanne Tulien. It has been written to provide, you, the business owner a more holistic view branding and to help clarify the ambiguity of the process of branding (not marketing), enabling you to begin shaping your brand’s strategy to leverage, catapult, and sustain business growth through conscious brand management.....REALLY.

Myth #1: My Brand Is My Logo

Many business owners believe that once their corporate identity (logo) is designed and put on a business card and stationery, a brochure is composed and printed, and an ad is submitted to a magazine or newspaper, then their branding is DONE. Phew! Well, that couldn’t be further from the truth. In fact, most of that effort was Marketing, not Branding (see previous Elevation newsletter, Vol. 1, Issue 1 on the BDG web site). Remember, “branding” is the **process** of creating and living **the message** – as your brand is a **PERCEPTION (a message)** that lives in the minds of your market and is defined by their experience with you, your products, and services. So, it is a PROCESS that continues in a consistent, distinctive and relevant way throughout the life of the business.

Imagine, if you can, you are an alien that just landed on earth. As you traverse across America, you start noticing this common, yet strange symbol of a green circle with white lettering within the rim and an illustration of a two tailed mermaid, or siren, (representing the seduction of the product) and have no clue as to what it represents to the beings living here on earth. Why is this symbol EVERYWHERE? What does it mean? Your curiosity finally hits critical mass as you pass the millionth circular symbol and you decide to satiate your curiosity and enter.....What you experience from the moment you open the door, to the robust aroma of Italian espresso, to the sounds of contemporary blues or jazz music, to the deeply rich colors and art of the décor, to the light hum of customers conversing as they relax in the cushion chairs, to the pleasant, warm greeting of the barista, to the taste of the rich, unique flavor of the product as the whipped cream topping leaves a mark on your nose...IS THE BRAND OF STARBUCKS®. All the stimulated information you took in, through your senses, within those few moments of transaction, is the brand of Starbucks.

You see how the logo, in and of itself did not create any sort of relationship or emotional connection to the actual meaning of the brand. It was your EXPERIENCE of it that created a brand relationship and provided *meaning to you*. Now, imagine leaving Starbucks and continuing your journey, and the next time you see the green, circular logo with the

mermaid, you now have a reference of the experience you FELT, and a concept of what Starbucks means to you.

Today, it is your “Brand” that is becoming the key source of differentiation that guides your customer’s purchase choices. But now you *know* your Brand is not just the creative design of the icon or font treatment of your corporate identity (logo)...it is so much more than the aesthetic ‘look’ in your signage, collateral, print ads or stationery. Your logo is only a **symbol** that represents or identifies **the brand** which is: (taken from *Brand Aid*, Brad VanAuken, AMACOM)

- the [experience] of a relationship with your customer
- the [experience] of a promise to your customer
- the unique source of products and services
- the single concept that you own inside the minds of your market
- **the sum total of each customer’s experience with you and your organization**

So now, when you hear other business owners say that they’ve just branded themselves and bought a logo design, or revised their web site look, you know that what they did was merely attempt to express their “brand” through a specific and unique look. True branding did not take place if they did not perform the due diligence necessary to document and articulate who they are as a brand ([BRAND DNA](#)). The process of branding is continual and creates powerful experiences, through specific systems and processes, leadership, and culture, for the employee and the customer and starts from the inside out.

A truly successful brand understands who they are at every level and assures that the brand is expressed and “lived” through every customer touch point, every action the business takes, and considered in every decision. It is a powerful, holistic process that requires conscious attention from the leaders and culture. Conscious branding can catapult and sustain business growth in every type of economic climate.

About the Author

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