

DEMAND FOR YOUR BRAND

How to Create Customer Insistence through Internal Employee Brand Engagement!
By Carol Chapman, Principal & Co-founder, The Brand Ascension Group

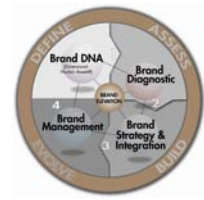
Building a brand in today's global market is very different from what it used to be. **No longer can an organization expect marketing to do the work of branding.** Marketing is important for communicating and spreading your brand's message, piquing the interest of and acquiring new customers, however, the sheer effort of marketing doesn't create a unique culture, systems and processes, nor deliver memorable brand experiences that keep customers coming back for more. That's why the **function of brand definition and development is critical prior to the creative efforts of marketing.**

Branding is the process of defining and consistently living your brand's message at the internal level through your employees to build the ever sought-after customer DEMAND FOR YOUR BRAND.

With the infusion of the internet into just about everything we do and social media connecting people across the globe, every business is highly exposed to anything and everything that is said about them. Like it or not, all **humans are emotional creatures.** Everyone loves a good story whether positive or negative. Stories can spread like wildfire and make or break a brand's reputation, empowering consumers to make snap decisions on whether to do business with you or your competitor. Talk about the creation of a new level of **transparency** for businesses. No longer can any business hide behind a clever marketing campaign to create DEMAND FOR YOUR BRAND.

Consider the following true story (that has been all over the internet for some time) about a musician, *Dave Carroll* on a flight from Nova Scotia to Nebraska, U.S. who claimed the airline broke his guitar that was valued around \$3,500. He spent several months trying to get the airline to make the situation right, to no avail. So, *Mr. Carroll* and his band recorded a song about the incident and posted it on YouTube. Needless to say, once the airline caught wind of the post it immediately contacted *Mr. Carroll* to make the situation right.

According to buzzstudy.com, their analysis of the web chatter on this airline brand showed a dramatic spike for many days following the post; creating a flurry of negative press for this carrier which could have been avoided if they had made the situation right for the customer in the first place. Situations like these can have a negative effect on any brand. In the airline



industry, many of us have come to accept and expect bad experiences. It seems like the status quo, but it doesn't have to be that way. Situations like these can easily be avoided by making sure your employees **understand** what your brand stands for and **are empowered** to deliver whatever it takes to deliver on it—including doing what it takes to make it right for the customer.

So, I think we can conclude that no longer are the days of companies buying their way through a clever marketing campaign to create DEMAND FOR THE BRAND. We're living in an **emotionally charged experience economy** that's moving at lightning speed. More often than not, marketing campaigns promise one thing, while the customer experiences something different. These campaigns are short-lived and a waste of a lot of time and money.

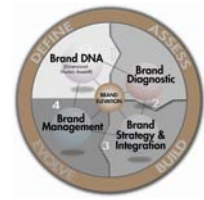
Creating demand for your brand is about forming a strong **emotional bond** with your customers. As emotional creatures your customers are forming impressions of your brand at every touch point. The best way to create customer demand is to engage your employees to get behind your brand and establish that emotional connection by delivering positively memorable experiences that delight your customers.

You've got to wow your customers at every possible opportunity. Your employees are the life-blood of the business and are crucial to its success. All the money spent on marketing messages cannot create insistence for your brand without the internal brand strategies to back up those messages. Marketing won't create a culture of engaged employees that live and breathe the essence of your brand consistently. You have to start internally to get your employees behind your brand and cultivate the culture that will behave in ways that affirm and continue to reaffirm your brand.

So how do you create DEMAND FOR YOUR BRAND through a culture of committed and engaged employees? Here are four simple steps:

1. Define the Essence of Your Brand—your unique Brand DNA.

Engaged employees understand the essence of the brand. By understanding the essence of your brand and being empowered through a set of shared values and standards to deliver on that essence, they will instinctively know how to act on those values, despite any procedures manual you may have. Procedures are guidelines but they shouldn't take the place of using common sense to delight customers. Let's take for example a **Brand Essence** expressed in 3-5 highly descriptive words (like a mantra) that every employee can



immediately comprehend. Take a look at these examples of some of our clients to illustrate the point. We refer to these as **Brand Platforms**. See the clarity and emotionally charged feeling they convey:

- Excellence, Simply Mind-blowing Experience
- E³ – Entertain, Engage, Excel!
- D₂D – Driven to Deliver!
- ESP – Extraordinary Solutions + Partnerships
- C.A.R.E.S – Community, Accountability, Respect, Empowerment, Service

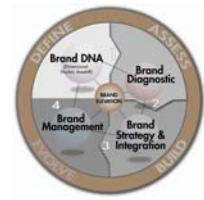
Each of these examples can give employees a clear focus on what these brands stand for. It's important to dig deep to uncover your unique Brand DNA—your values, your style or personality as a brand, your differentiators, and your standards of performance, your Brand Platform and Promise. However, it doesn't stop there; your Brand DNA is the blueprint that needs to be embedded into every facet of your organization. There needs to be some teeth behind how you and your employees deliver on what the brand stands for through distinctive and consistent behaviors.

2. Ensure Effective On-going Communication

Leverage every opportunity to communicate the essence of your brand and reaffirm the message. There are a variety of ways to do so—through your orientation or on-boarding process, your employee handbook, town hall meetings, daily interactions and team meetings. If you are a larger organization, bring together Marketing, HR and Communications to develop a well-thought out process for communicating your brand through all the internal vehicles available.

Be creative, leverage your internal newsletter, your website or intranet to speak about what you stand for; consider developing a brand-relevant DVD that explains the attributes of your brand for employees or a branded mascot that serves to champion and express the essence of the brand. Get the information out there on what your brand stands for and do it continually. **Repetition is golden.**

One of our clients has created a cartoon character named Elena E³! Based on their Brand Platform: Entertain, Engage, Excel! She is the official brand champion representative and even has her own email address. She acts as the 'cheerleader' for the brand and regularly sends out messages, appears on videos and through emails reminding and empowering the



employees to live the brand. So far, this has been a very successful internal campaign to keep the essence of the brand top of mind.

Communication should always be **two-way**. Give your employees opportunities to ask questions and express ideas in a proactive and productive manner, and provide feedback.

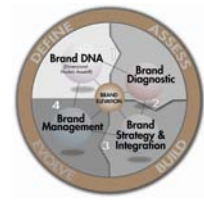
3. Develop and Implement Branded Service Training to Deliver on the Brand Experience

Develop a **fun, experiential** and **highly interactive training** process for all employees to better understand, embrace and deliver a **branded service experience** both internally and externally that reflects the essence of the brand. Convey the importance of how you can differentiate your brand behaviorally at every touch point.

An effective branded service training program incorporates a variety of activities by **applying the different modalities for adult learning** (i.e., visual, auditory, intellectual and kinesthetic) to help employees understand what it takes to deliver the desired branded experience, such as:

- Role playing training/scenarios at key touch points to help employees learn behaviors that reflect the brand.
- Developing a distinctive 'brand speak' that can be incorporated into daily interactions with other employees and customers.
- Communications etiquette both in oral and written form.
- Emotional intelligence understanding/training to help your employees enhance their self-awareness and self-management, as well as develop more social awareness and relationship management skills when interacting with one another and customers.
- Understanding/reading body language.
- Personal image and professional presence that reflect the brand.
- How to interpret and adapt individual style that complements your brand's overall style.

Training in these areas can go a long way in channeling employees' energies and how they manage their behaviors with one another and your customers—creating that ever coveted DEMAND FOR YOUR BRAND.



4. Reinforce the Desired Brand Behaviors

Recognition can go a long way. Make sure you have a recognition program that is highly **brand-relevant**. A well-designed and effectively administered recognition program can have many positive results such as:

- More proactive, fully engaged employees
- Fosters channels of communication
- Increases productivity
- Motivates employees to believe in the brand and achieve more
- Reinforces your brand's attributes (i.e., values, style, culture, brand essence, etc.)
- Creates camaraderie
- Builds a culture of trust, confidence and appreciation
- Acknowledges positive behaviors that support the brand
- Builds mutual commitments and relationships
- Improves employee and customer satisfaction
- Boosts sales and bottom-line performance

A recognition program doesn't have to be solely financially focused. In fact, recognition can take a variety of forms.

Identify and establish the **right mix and array of creative vehicles**. Best practices suggest as much **personalization** as possible.

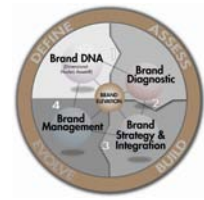
Get your employees involved in developing the program. Consider a variety of fun awards, celebrations, 'kudos', parties, personalized gifts, thank you notes, simple praises, regular internal press releases, external customer press releases, certificates. You'll be amazed at the how creative you can get.

Follow these simple steps to create and sustain DEMAND FOR YOUR BRAND!



About the Author -- Carol is committed to organizations who want to achieve transformational and sustainable brand success through **strategic, internal branding** practices. As co-developer of The Brand DNA JourneySM methodology, she has helped numerous clients create consistent, relevant and distinctive experiences that inspire, motivate and engage employees to deliver memorable customer experiences.

For 30 years, Carol has cultivated extensive global experience and proven success in leading businesses through significant challenges. Her experience spans a variety of industries including hospitality/hotels and



other service related, cable, media, government contractors, government—local, state and municipal, high technology, professional services, financial services—banking and insurance and healthcare. Specific accomplishments include guiding businesses through rapid change, brand development/alignment and revitalization, branded service training, organization development, performance capability, compensation and benefits, employee engagement and service enhancement, talent acquisition, leadership assessment and development, and mergers and acquisitions.

She has developed brand scorecards for managing business metrics and performance and reward programs to create a clear line-of-sight for employees. This has resulted in laser-focus at the individual level that drive team, unit and brand performance aligned with business/brand goals. She has a passion for branding, where she believes everyone in an organization is responsible for understanding and delivering “on-brand” experiences.

Having held several executive management and strategic HR roles, including Vice President of Human Resources—Asia Pacific for the largest hotel company in the world – Six Continents Hotels (currently Inter-Continental Hotels Group), she has learned that the most successful and sustainable brand organizations harness the energies of their people to bring their brands to life through the power of this most critical asset.

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