



Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: Brand New Year

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Welcome

Happy New Year. This issue of T.I.M.E. starts off the brand new year with a look at Branding.

The concept of branding offers valuable lessons for staging a great meeting. Moreover, we must recognize that meetings are ideal opportunities to further the brand identity.

I am pleased to introduce in this issue, a brand new business contact of mine, Nina Brakel. Nina and her partner, Sue Kirchner, are principals at Identity 3.0 LLC a brand consulting firm . Like good branding that permeates throughout an organization, Nina's valuable insight, comments and experience abound throughout this issue. I would encourage you to learn more about them at their website: www.identity3.com or click here. [Identity 3.0](#)

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What is a Brand?

A brand is not merely a symbol or a name, but the culmination of communications and experiences that a person receives from every contact with an organization. A brand is the proprietary visual, emotional, rational, and cultural image that you associate with a company or a product. Strong brands share four characteristics:

- Possess a share of mind

- Create trust
- Are focused
- Based on Emotions or Beliefs

Brands create relationships between yourself and the company or product. The relationship is akin to a close friendship. Friendships develop over time, are built on trust and emotion. Friendships allow for less than perfection in the relationship – although over time, a friendship can disintegrate if it fails to meet your expectations.

Nina Brakel at Identify 3.0 identifies the advantages of a strong brand: A strong brand will help you -

- Market to the right people – the ones who value your “brand” promise
- Make the right products or offer the right services
- Plan your strategic direction
- Hire and retain the right employees
- Increase customer and employee loyalty

Branding In Action

Building an effective brand is done through a strategy orchestrated by marketing and fully supported by the management of the organization. However, simply having a strategy does not make a brand though!

It is in the execution of a branding program where meetings and brands intersect. Branding is a popular concept and its execution has implications for Innovative Meetings.

Organizations with strong brands understand that having regular communication through meetings and other two-way conversations with all members of their brand communities is critical to successful branding. A brand community is made up of executives, employees, partners and alliances, customers, prospects, industry peers, media, suppliers and shareholders.

Strong branding becomes part of the culture when your employees or members, partners, customers and shareholders are fully cognizant of your brand. A brand is strong when you see an employee live up to a brand promise or when a customer refers you to another based on your successful delivery.

Mark Di Somma says that the three things you need to build a brand-aligned culture are “information, inspiration and motivation”

In my opinion, the best way to spread that information, inspiration and motivation is through meetings. Those meetings include:

- Internal meetings

- Meetings with customers and prospects
- Investor relations meetings
- Stockholders meetings

Especially in internal meetings, employees see upper management live up to their core values and brand promise. They see leadership walk the talk in meetings.

Meetings Beat Memos

Creating that two way communication won't occur if you only choose to send memos.

- Meetings allow you to model behavior
- Meetings allow you to create passion and inspiration
- Meetings contain energy

It is also important that your employees understand, believe in and act according to your brand. Customers will not be loyal to something that employees don't believe in. People must actually live the brand values, and line up internal behavior with external values. This creates credibility.

Branding and culture are related because branding provides internal focus, branding can drive direction of the organization. Your brand will be compromised if departments or areas function in isolation and lose collective sight of the customer. The brand must permeate the culture otherwise you will have pockets or silos where the behavior, attitudes, and processes create an entirely different brand.

Successful branding requires that your culture and people are aligned to your brand. Branding is an investment just like investments in buildings, information technology and research and development. Without this investment you will be operating at a competitive disadvantage.

At the Institute for International Research's The Branding Trilogy Conference in Santa Barbara, California, Kristine Shattuck, Los Angeles Area Marketing Manager, Southwest Airlines put it well when she said, "Enthusiastic employees spread enthusiasm to customers. Market to your employees as much as your customers. If your employees don't 'get it,' neither will your customers." This can only happen if top management aligns all of its processes and systems in support of its brand's promise.

Better than riches: Benefits of Branding

"A good name is better than riches." said Miguel de Cervantes, the Spanish novelist and author of Don Quixote.

Why do people want a Volvo? What is the value of a Tiffany box? Customers pay a premium for security and quality. People prefer the known over the unknown, and stay loyal to brands that "work" for them, both in tangible and intangible ways.

Branding helps create differentiation in a word that is full of products (many of them commoditized) and full of noise.

Branding a Meeting

We know that meetings help a branding strategy. What can we learn from branding that will help meetings?

1. Meetings Need the 3 C's

Just as marketing has the 4 P's (Placement, Product, Price, and Publicity), branding is driven by the "three C's of branding: Clarity, Consistency, and Constancy. Meetings also benefit from clarity, consistency and constancy.

2. Alignment is Paramount

Successful branding requires an alignment between the business and brand strategy. Meetings are also a tool to build the business and must be tied to the overall business strategy.

3. Profound Customer Knowledge is Essential

Any branding initiative must start with a solid understanding of the customers' needs. Likewise, any effort to craft a meeting must begin with understanding what the participants want to walk away with after the meeting.

4. Brand Relies on Emotions and a Sensory Experience

Emotional connection is what every brand strives for. Branding is built upon awareness, and then trust and finally the consumer feels an emotional connection. People become emotionally connected to a brand for a number of reasons:

- o The brand stands for something important to them.
- o The brand is intense and vibrant. It connects with people on multiple levels across several senses.
- o The brand is unique.
- o The brand is admirable.
- o The brand consistently interacts with them. It never disappoints them.
- o The brand makes them feel good.

(From an article by Brad VanAuken at <http://www.allaboutbranding.com>)

Successful meetings also create emotional connections. This is the uniqueness of face-to-face events. The lesson from branding is to insure that we take full advantage of the emotional and sensory opportunities presented by meetings. Nina Brakel added that "In meetings you can share your brand using several mediums, especially to appeal to those who absorb information visually." Later in his article where VanAuken cites the 15 most important things to know about Building Winning Brands, he sites #11: Create a sense of community.

Like brands, meetings should also create a sense of community. The face-to-face interaction is every meeting's inherent advantage and should be fully capitalized upon in every setting.

5. Monitor and Measure

In branding, an organization is building brand equity. Like meeting impact, brand equity can be an elusive element to track.

The team at Identity 3.0 has identified three reasons to measure a branding strategy:

Dollars and sense. Brand measurement enables you to allocate dollars where you see the biggest bang for your buck.

Brand bulls-eye. Measurement keeps your brand on target by evaluating if your communications are used effectively and consistently throughout your organization. The results help you fine-tune your effort and gauge the responses of various audiences.

Follow through. Measurement allows you to determine if you are delivering your brand promise.

Measurement is a key issue for meetings. I like these three points because they also apply particularly well to meetings. When challenged to provide the value of a meeting, one must also consider how else could you “deliver the message” of the meeting. The value should be determined by an analysis of other options! If you don't have the meeting what else could you do? Write a report, filter the message through layers of management, or send an email??

Measurement always helps support focus and follow-through. Measurement helps refine and make improvements.

6. **Keep your Brand Promise**

Nothing is worse than disappointing by not delivering the expected results. Meetings and meeting participants should work hard to keep their promise made before and during meetings. People involved in the planning process should deliver what they said they would. Participants should fulfill their role too in keeping the meeting's promise.

Freebies: Name that Brand

FREEBIES:

Nina Brakel offers effective but simple advice on branding. When you are defining your brand rely on the Dale Carnegie quote, “People aren't interested in you. They are interested in themselves.” Therefore, think long and hard about how your customer or employees should care about your promise. Put yourself in their shoes.

Here are some examples of great branding:

The janitor at NASA who is asked “Why are you here?” to which he replies “I’m helping put a man on the moon.”

Southwest Airlines is a company with a brand, a focus and a culture. Need I say more? Haven't we all heard the stories about Southwest or experienced the brand?

Starbucks turned coffee drinking into a pampering, indulgent experience. I met a colleague for coffee this past week and was amazed at all the socializing that occurred at my local Starbucks. The socializing occurred between patrons, and importantly between the barista and the customers. The employees were living the brand.

More FREEBIES

Ready for more? Nina Brakel has offered to provide the readers of T.I.M.E. with a series of four articles on how to build a brand entitled, "Winning the Branding Game". She has also articulated the difference between your brand and identity. Curious? Email Nina at nina@identity3.com or click here [Nina Brakel](#)

You can learn more about Identity 3.0 LLC at their website www.identity3.com or click here [Identity 3.0](#)

Future T.I.M.E.

A book is on the horizon!! I am in the process of writing a How To book on increasing the productivity of meetings through better communication strategies. The base of literature in existence on meeting productivity addresses basic issues (start your meeting on time, be sure there is a need for a meeting). My creation (tentatively titled Meetings with Muscle) will delve deeper by suggesting ideas, strategies, and tips for improving the very core of the meeting -- the content.

If you have any contributions or are willing to preview parts of the book, I would love to include you on the team! Please email me and offer your suggestions.

T.I.M.E. Gone By

If you are interested in past issues, please e-mail us with the month and topic and we will send you a copy of that newsletter. Here's what is included in past issues [Back Issue Request](#):

May 2000: [Teambuilding](#) and (Freebie) New York Times Reprint On Teambuilding

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