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Winning Customers by Getting In Sync

“How do I get more customers?” Ask a group of marketing experts this age-old question and you’ll get a host of answers, most of them tactical in nature. For example, you may be advised to establish a strong social media presence; “Blogs, Tweets and Facebook pages are the way to connect with customers.” Another commonly offered suggestion -- “Get the best possible CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software to serve your customers.” Although these recommendations are effective in developing a connection with customers and prospects, they aren’t strategies for building a long-term customer base.

Managing the Relationship Between Three Principles of Branding

To have a sustained, profitable and growing business, the best approach is not only to “win” new customers but to develop loyal, long-term customer relationships. To do so, you must apply and effectively managing the relationship between three principles of branding: your promise, your strategy and your customers’ experiences.

1. Your promise

Your promise is what your organization tells your customers they can expect from you. An effective promise usually forges an emotional bond and creates expectations about concrete services or products.

Think of something as simple as a promise that a phone call will be returned

no later than the next business day. It’s concrete. It can be measured. And, when delivered well over time, this promise will create a belief within the customer that he/she is valued. Now, organizations are not normally built on the promise of quickly returned phone calls. Your promise needs to be conceptually broader; it needs to be global. Quickly returned phone calls could be an expression of a broader commitment of being the fastest or most customer-centric organization.

For example, what do you think of when you think of FedEx? Their promise could be expressed as “speedy reliability.” FedEx delivers “speedy reliability” by offering concrete and specific guarantees about how they will deliver on that promise.

Ask yourself: What do I promise my customers? Do my specific promises align well with my global promise?

2. Your strategy

The second branding principle that is key to long-term customer relationships is your strategy. That is, how will you deliver on your promise? Are there organizational capacities you need to enhance? Are there new capacities you need to develop? Have you built an organization (or are you committed to making the necessary change) that can deliver on your promise?

Think back to our simple example of quickly returned phone calls. What infrastructure is required in order to deliver on this concrete promise? Sufficient staffing. Well-trained employees. Resources

to enable employees to respond quickly (both knowledge and technology-based). Imagine all the strategic initiative required to deliver on an even broader, global promise.

Ask yourself: Does my strategy effectively address how I will deliver on my promise?

3. Your customers’ experiences

Finally, your customers’ experiences must align with your promise. In our simple example, this means that your customers must hear back from you no later than the next business day. And if they receive the return phone call, will it be from an employee who takes pride in this commitment to quickly responding? Or will it be from an employee that does it grudgingly and sees it as an imposition? Will the information provided during the phone call be helpful? After all, your customers’ positive experiences will ultimately drive corporate growth.

Ask yourself: Do my customers’ experiences match my promise?

Many firms’ promises generate hyperpole that later lead to disappointment. Expectations are raised, only to experience mediocrity (or less). However, by managing the relationship between the three principles of branding, your organization has the opportunity to win loyal customers. Only then will you be in sync and poised to sustain long-term growth.