


Creative B2B Branding (no, really)

Scot McKee

7 Publish and be damned (launch)

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

7 Publish and be damned (launch)

- ▶ Obstacles and how to overcome them
- ▶ Maintaining momentum in the brand even if the business turns
- ▶ Brand measurement before, during, during and during

Learning to let go

Launching or re-launching a brand on an unsuspecting public is a trying time for the marketing department. But it's just one of many trying times in the marketing department and as long as you keep a steady nerve and don't peak too early, everything should work out. Your objective is to maximize the opportunity of a successful brand launch.

Unfortunately, whilst you are trying to remain calm, you'll probably find that everyone else starts to become nervous. There is without doubt, a very distinct difference between, 'Yes, a new brand is a good idea', and actually handing over the cash and pressing the button to launch one. Stakeholders will almost certainly have an opinion on the launch tactics and that opinion will be shared with you. Whether you like it or not. The opportunities for misunderstanding, confusion, procrastination, delay, alteration... just about everything in fact, are many. It's a wonder sometimes that any new brand gets out the starting gate. But the opinions are important and they have to be heard. It's relevant that you hold your nerve before launch and make sure that everyone who needs to be consulted has indeed been consulted. But it's more important that you know when to stop talking and pull the damn trigger. There will always be a dissenting voice in the wilderness, a doubting Thomas. That shouldn't stop the launch. Nothing should stop the launch.

If a brand strategy development process of almost any competent description has been followed, everyone will have had their say. Internal staff will have been consulted about the brand, their voices heard and their points noted. External audiences will have been questioned, customer opinions will have shaped the brief to the creative teams and the resulting brand strategy and Creative Platform output will have a direct and visible link back through to the internal and external input. So what are you waiting for?

Well, experience suggests you'll wait for anything and everything. Unlike just about every other marketing activity where time is of the essence and ludicrous, often impossible time pressures and deadlines are applied to speed of delivery, the launch of the new brand suddenly slows down. 'Can we see it in red, just to make sure?' 'Sir would like to show it to his gardener.' 'What do you think about a "soft-launch"? Should we have a soft-launch? – You know, just let the thing ooze out and see if anyone notices, what do you think?' 'The French have got a problem...' Everyone starts to feel nervous. There are careers at stake, jobs on the line, targets to be met, sales to be increased. And the French have always got a problem.

Yes, a new brand launch is kind of a big deal, but we knew that at the outset and having completed all the hard work, the only consideration should be unleashing the big idea on the world. The whole point of following a brand-building strategy is that you have developed, probably for the first time, a communications platform based on objectively gathered 'evidence'. So the answer's going to be the right answer. You know that because the people who matter the most – customers, prospects and staff – told you the answer. You don't need to worry about the gardener. You just need to launch.

And actually, that's the easy bit, because it's tactical. It's a project. It's a party. It's whatever you want it to be, but the navel-gazing's over and it's time to get to work. For B2B brands, that's often the hardest part – the letting go and, who knows, maybe even enjoying the release. At the end of a particularly intense project for a large, global technology consultancy, I ended up staring at my laptop for three days, not knowing what to do next. It wasn't even a long project, just intense. I was wholly absorbed in the brand, defining it, articulating it, shaping it – all against a deadline. I delivered. I handed the project over to the business' internal marketing team and a week or two later, it launched. I felt bereft during those three days of staring at my

Chapter extract

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