

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

Sunday, February 22, 2009

BRAND “LANGUAGE”: KEEPING IT SIMPLE (OR, *BRAND POSITIONING* AND ... BRANDING, BRAND ARCHITECTURE, BRAND FOOTPRINT, BRAND “BOOK”)

We have written in past *Dispatches* about some of the challenges of speaking a common marketing language, despite the earnest desires of so many marketing organizations to actually speak one. A couple of discussions with clients over the past few weeks have brought to mind the difficulty of simply agreeing on what even the most fundamental of marketing concepts mean—particularly in that all-important sub-marketing area we often call brand-building.

The discussions we are referring to both began with the client expressing a desire to strengthen their respective “brand positionings.” But as we talked further, it became clear that in neither case was the client really talking about a standard brand positioning. One client was working with an amalgamation of a number of positioning and other “brand” related things, like “Brand Values,” “Brand Assets,” “Brand Promise” (which included an element of a brand positioning - the end benefit for the consumer). The other client was really thinking about something well downstream of a brand positioning: crafting a new logo design and a slogan that could then be incorporated across all the sub-constituencies within the company - for a “look” that customers would easily recognize as belonging to that brand. Most marketers we know would refer to this, more executional rather than strategic activity, as a means of “Branding.”

So, who’s right and who’s wrong? Perhaps the truth is that whichever language works best for an organization toward building better, more competitive brands is the right one. But still, having seen so many clients over the years struggle with either a language that is overly complicated or with one that misses the essentials makes us big believers in, if nothing else, ensuring the marketing team speaks the simple language of Brand Positioning. If we go back and look at the first client above, it’s clear that they know and speak most of the simple language of Brand Positioning. But, in our opinion, they make it harder for individual marketers to focus against getting the essential *elements* of Brand Positioning right - by allowing for overlap in meanings (between their “Key Benefit” and “Brand Promise,” for example). And if we go back to the second client above we can see that they really do **not** speak the simple language of Brand Positioning at all...thereby missing out on that all-critical “brand DNA” document that directs the building of the brand over time.

For us, now working over 35 years each in building better brands, no language works like the simple language of Brand Positioning. Having this language does not mean other brand-building concepts and actions (like “Brand Architecture,” “Branding,” and “Brand Book”) are not important. It’s just that these things are not primary - they follow from, are downstream from the Brand Positioning Statement.

For this week's Boats & Helicopters we thought we would share our quick takes on what each of these brand-building terms mean. You may not agree, and that's okay. But we can virtually guarantee that if your marketing organization speaks the simple language of Brand Positioning, it will not go wrong.

BOATS & HELICOPTERS:

- 1. Brand Positioning (*Strategic*):** A statement that expresses the way we want our customers/consumers to perceive, think, and feel about our brand relative to competition. The statement should include these essential elements: Target, Competitive Framework, Benefits, Reasons Why, and Brand Character. It is typically a one or two page document that directs everything the brand does, not merely what the brand says in its communications. And every brand, regardless of whether it intends to advertise or not, needs this statement. Ideally, the statement would precede all sub-strategies (like pricing, promotion, PR) and all initiatives (like naming the brand, choosing package nomenclature and logo, developing merchandising materials, and so on).
- 2. Brand Promise (*Strategic*):** Another term for Brand Benefits; an essential element of the Brand Positioning. Brand Benefits may include one or more of three types: Product Benefit (what the product does); Customer/Consumer Benefit (what that provides); Emotional Benefit (how that makes people feel).
- 3. Brand Architecture (*Strategic*):** A diagram, often in "box-plan" style (like an organization chart) that illustrates the various sub-parts of a brand "family." It makes clear what sub-categories or classes of products the brand plays in. For example, the Snickers Brand Architecture would include line extensions like Snickers Almond sub-brands like Snickers Cruncher and Marathon Bar from Snickers—along with the linkages to the parent, Snickers (Peanut).
- 4. Brand Nomenclature (*Executional*):** The specific terminology that typically appears on a brand's primary "face" or packaging in a market. It typically follows a pre-planned hierarchy, often starting with the actual brand logo in official/legally-registered format, then line extension or sub-brand logos, then category or class identifier (like "chocolate bar") and so on.
- 5. Branding (*Executional*):** All the design elements a brand uses to identify itself. These obviously include Brand Nomenclature elements, along with associated icons, colors, and layout schemes that are to be used consistently wherever the brand appears. Many of these are also legally protected.
- 6. Brand Footprint or Brand Book (*Executional*):** As the second name implies, typically a booklet that spells out in great detail how the brand's Branding is to be executed

consistently. It would make clear what logo styles are permissible, for example. Some companies choose to include a Brand Positioning Statement at the beginning of their Brand Footprint or Book as well. Good idea!

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Please forward any comments regarding the newsletter to Lori Vandervoort at our Central Division Offices of BDN International, 800-255-9831 or 620-431-0780. Thank you. We welcome your comments.

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