

DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

Sunday, April 25, 2010

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE WITH THE COMPANY

This week Brand Development Network International Inc. will be conducting its annual “Open” Brand Positioning & Communication College program in Kansas City, Missouri. This is notable in that we conduct only one of these “open” programs each year, the remainder being devoted to conducting customized programs for our clients. Also notable is that we will be celebrating the company’s 25th-anniversary.

We’re very proud, yet humbled, by reaching this milestone, particularly since nearly 95% of all new businesses fail within their first 5-years. For us to be around for these past 25-years suggests we are satisfying real needs, in a meaningful way. For this we are very, very grateful. It has also given us pause to reflect on what our organization, BDNI, has meant, and continues to mean, to us. We believe that it is important to take the time to reflect on this so as to remind us why we do what we do and not, for an instant, to become complacent or to take our customers for granted, as do far too many successful organizations. Otherwise we risk sowing the seeds for eventual decline.

What does BDNI mean to us?

First, it has provided us with the opportunity to do what we love to do – serve others. Many will say the purpose of the organization is to earn profits. We cannot and would not argue with the need to earn profits. They’re the lifeblood of any organization. But to focus on profits alone is to defeat the organization’s purpose. An unbalanced focus on profits forgets or, at the least, marginalizes the customer. It is the customer that the organization must serve. In serving the customer better than its competition (or the alternative, whatever that might be) the organization is able to profit.

This “serving” is certainly not on the same level as performing a humanitarian deed, such as providing aid to the quake victims in Haiti or China. But we do serve. We serve by anticipating customer needs and satisfying those needs with integrity. We are not just about making a sale but somehow enhancing the customer’s life whether it be: providing a tasty and nutritious meal at an affordable price for a family; to put a smile on someone’s face; or, on a more serious note, to overcome a debilitating condition to extend the quality of life. Each of these is noble in its way. At BDNI we serve to help *empower marketers* to be more successful in doing all of these things. We help empower marketers by providing practical training, and planning, to enable them to better serve their customers.

We have been able to devote our attention to our customers’ needs unencumbered by the demands of, and jockeying that takes place in, many large corporations. We are involved in

significant marketing related issues. It's what we do each and every day of our work life at BDNI. This, in turn, enhances our experiences enabling us to do more, significantly more for each of our clients. What we learn from one client assignment, in one part of the world, benefits all of our clients in every part of the world regardless of the industry.

Second, it has enabled us to work with people we care about. This starts with our clients. We are so fortunate to be in a position to pick our clients. Oh, yes, our clients most certainly select us. But we are also free to choose with whom we want to work, and on what assignment. It is a marriage. We are not only in concert with the objectives of our clients but their personal hopes and aspirations too. We sincerely like them as people, and value them not only as clients but friends. Together we form a bond, united in assisting each other, to achieve more success. When our clients succeed we are greatly gratified. They too are gratified when they see us succeed.

Within BDNI, while we are not related by blood, we are family. Our relationships go back many, many years. While BDNI turned 25 in January of this year a few of us have worked together and/or known each other going back more than 30-years. The average tenure of each BDNI consultant is more than 10-years. On average each of us has more than 30-years of marketing experience. While we each think differently we share similar capabilities and, importantly, values.

Our operations staff, located in Chanute, Kansas, has been with us for nearly 20-years now. They work diligently to handle important logistics so that we consultants can devote our attention to serving our customers. They care for the quality of the work and for us. We, too, care for them.

Everyone within BDNI is looking to care for our customers, each other and our small company. We have been able to provide for each other. We take pride in seeing a colleague's child graduate from college, get married and/or have children. In some small way BDNI has been a part of these milestones too. Who could possibly ask for more of his organization than to contribute to the enrichment of each other's lives?

Third, BDNI contributes to our personal development. As mentioned earlier we are involved in the important marketing issues our clients face. If it is not an important issue then they would neither need us nor would it be economically wise to employ us. Therefore, everything for which they engage us is important. So virtually 100% of our time is devoted to resolving critically important marketing issues such as contributing to the development of a global brand positioning strategy for a new launch or marketing plans that marry brand and business planning, among others.

We have the opportunity to work with leading companies in a wide variety of categories. At this week's "open" we will work with marketers from nearly one-dozen different companies in more than one-dozen categories. Just last week we had the privilege of working with a multi-national company in the pharmaceutical, medical device and consumer sectors – in Kuala Lumpur, for their Asian region. We are exposed to top-notch marketers and their organizations.

We learn from each of our assignments. We learn from our customers. This contributes to our personal development and ability to better serve our customers regardless of the sector, category or geography. It has contributed to our being able to: share DISPATCHES each week; write our first book, *Creating Brand Loyalty – The Management of Power Positioning and Really Great*

Advertising; and write our forthcoming book, *Competitive Positioning – Best Practices for Creating Brand Loyalty*. It has enabled us to deepen our learning, and personal and organizational development.

Fourth, and finally, it gives us a sense of purpose. Our purpose is in serving our customers to help *make marketing matter*. We are talking about making marketing account for something special and to realize its potential within client organizations. Unfortunately, marketing has, in many organizations, been relegated to delivering in the short term. It has been reduced to making a sales transaction today, overlooking (or ignoring) the opportunity to transform the marketplace in delivering customer experiences that serve to create brand loyalty. Consequently: the customer loses out; products within markets are, in turn, perceived as commodities; the productivity of marketing support is undermined; and the organization begins to experience *pre-maturation* (i.e., premature maturation) stimulating a downward spiral. Most marketers cannot identify the return-on-investment (ROI) of their tactics making those tactics an easy target for budget cutting. We, at BDNI, are not about restoring the budget but making marketing work. If marketing works then the budget funding will follow. If marketing works the customer benefits and so does the brand, organization, and virtually everyone in it.

We are so very fortunate and thankful that we wake-up each day eager to work with our clients and each other in making marketing matter. We love and live our work. We are most appreciative of the opportunities that BDNI has provided to each of us, and the contributions it has enabled us to make.



Happy 25th-anniversary Brand Development Network International.

Thank you to all our clients, team and family members.

We would not have reached this milestone without you.

Here's looking to continued success together in 2010, and reaching 30.

Perhaps, we can all serve to empower each other and make marketing matter, really matter again for more marketers and their organizations.

BOATS & HELICOPTER:

Here are some thoughts for each of our readers:

1. **Take time to reflect on the value of your organization.** Too often we are quick to discount the value of our organization. To identify its problems as opposed to being grateful for the many contributions it makes to our lives. Our organizations not only provide us with a livelihood to make possible the dreams of our family members (such as education) but they provide each of

us with personal learning and growth experiences.

2. **Recommit to giving your organization your best thinking and effort.** Our work with an organization is not part of our “rights.” It’s a privilege, one we should not forget. In fact, we need to be mindful of earning that privilege. Seek opportunities to learn so that you may better serve. Never, ever be satisfied with what you gave yesterday. Give more to produce more for today and into the future.
3. **Integrate within the team.** Yes, the organization is a team. In any team there will be superstars. Perhaps, you are a superstar. But team play is of critical importance in achieving success in serving customers better than the competition. Marketing must unite the functions within the organization, and accomplish this without “hard” authority. That’s quite a formidable task. In order to achieve this we need to be team captains but remember to be team players. Do what needs to be done when it needs to be done without being asked. This is another way of saying, “step up to the plate and do something for the team.”
4. **Care for something and somebody beside yourself.** Start with caring, really, truly caring for your customers. Do what is in their best interest and they will reward you with the business. Care too for others within your organization. Be generous in assisting them in being successful. Their success means more success for the organization and everyone in it.

We wish each of you the joy we have had with BDNI. Let’s celebrate our great good fortune. Let’s honor our organizations, customers and each other.

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