

Creating and sustaining an internal brand



By [Daniel Munslow](#)

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Internal branding is a complex discipline that goes beyond the exclusive use of internal advertising material. Executed correctly, it is able to support business objectives and reap great rewards for both employees and communicators.

It stands to reason that, if companies can effectively engage with their employees and the things they do in the company to deliver the brand promise, the business will benefit from effective and strategic internal branding.

Traditionally, organisations have spent massive budgets on external advertising, with the aim of raising awareness and shaping an expectation in the minds of consumers. This is critical when you think that, according to a Keller Fay Group survey, the average person will mention in excess of 50 brands in the course of a week's conversations.

Companies don't spend enough time

What companies do not spend enough time on, is the related internal brand - the one that is experienced and enacted by employees.

It is this internal brand that is ultimately translated into the deliverables of the brand promise that costs hundreds of millions to create. After all, the employees of an organisation are the touch points of business to its customers.

The numbers are harsh and speak for themselves: according to the American Marketing Association, only 8% of people leave a brand because of competitors. Sixty eight percent of those who leave a brand have cited an employee's indifferent attitude. It gets worse - each of those people tell an average of eight others, who all then mention it in the social media sphere.

Therefore, brand engagement to internal audiences is just as important, if not more important, than all the efforts placed on external branding. The concept applies equally whether you are talking business-to-consumer (B2C) or business-to-business (B2B).

The Six Step Model

There are six identifiable steps to the development of a solid internal branding campaign.

1. Identify the business objectives

What is it that the business is trying to achieve? Align specific tactics that could assist in delivering the end objectives that have been stated. This step also positions communicators as business people first and only then communicators. There are two levels to consider: what is the organisation trying to achieve, and what is the specific initiative trying to achieve?

2. Determine the needs of the audience

Always ask: what do I want to tell people? What do they want to hear? How do they want to hear it? Communicators today are involving the employees more and more in the internal branding process, to ensure that they buy into it. We have moved away from a telling era to a selling era. This is a fundamental and substantial mind shift.

Once the audience is segmented, start the rollout by showing top-level buy-in, and effective communication throughout the organisation model. This requires a focus on leadership training to ensure the messages are consistent throughout the business.

3. What are your communication goals?

As a by-product of the company's business objectives, specific goals now need to be set from a communications perspective; ie what does communication need to do to inform and deliver the business objectives?

4. Develop the core messages and theme of the campaign

Message mapping now becomes key... how will the campaign be themed, identified and structured? In this process, communicators should ensure that each message has a stand-alone identifier, so as not to confuse various campaign elements. Each message, in turn, must sum up the key points; provide a list of behaviours as to what has changed and how; the facts to support the message; and the illustrations and stories to make the information real.

5. Develop your full plan and the tools you need

Now a full communication plan can be put into place, to ensure that the above goals and objectives are met. It's important to remember that the posters are a platform of delivery - the focus must be on the relevance of the messages. This is what will deliver your impact.

6. Measure the impact of your campaign (not just process and content)

Once the campaign has rolled out, how will you know whether you have succeeded? It doesn't come from extensive research that illustrates that people like the wallpaper. It comes from the real analysis of whether people have bought into, and changed their behaviours based on the messages that were disseminated.

While internal branding speaks to many of the themes and messages that we want to communicate to various audiences within the organisation, all this collateral needs to be supported by a sound and detailed communications campaign that involves leadership, relevance of messages, and alignment with core business objectives.

ABOUT DANIEL MUNSLOW

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