

Revisiting Corporate Image

The purpose and marketing function of a strong corporate image is sometimes lost in the pressurized environment of competition, new product introduction, customer loyalty programs and all the other tasks placed on typically understaffed marketing departments. Yet it is the corporate image that enables and enhances all other marketing efforts. This article is a reminder of the centrality and importance of an excellent corporate image and why having a great corporate image is not only the right business decision, but in fact a business imperative.

There are 7 points Tudog wants to reinforce with regard to corporate image, with the intention that one or more of these 7 will provide your company with the motivation and incentive to review and improve your current corporate image. The 7 points are:

1. A Great Corporate Image is a Value Generator

The creation and maintenance of a great corporate image can add significant value to a company by adding to its competitive edge and the relationship the company has with its customers. The corporate image of companies like Nike and Apple are now part of the value of the company and when investors elect to buy shares in these companies they do so as much because of the instilled value these companies have developed and sustained based on their reputation and image. While Nike and Apple may be obvious examples, they did not start out that way. Their management understood the inherent value of image and sought, from the very beginning, to incorporate it into their company's value proposition. Without a corporate image, your company stands still and anonymous in a very crowded and competitive business environment. Add some personality, some principles, and some attitude, and you'll be one of a kind. When it comes to value creation, one of a kind beats a full house.

2. Image Improves Function

The image you select for your company will help you with product design and functionality. If your image is cutting edge and innovative you will inherently seek to develop new products and establish new markets. If your image is high performance you will seek to enhance and improve core products. In fact, even the functions of your products will in some ways be influenced by the image you seek to project. The image you select will dictate how you are defined in the market and that, in turn, will help define how you establish yourself in the marketplace. For these reasons, naturally, it is very important that the image you select match the internal capacities, business intentions, and personalities of the driving forces.

3. Image Clarifies Identity

The crowded marketplace has companies doing all kinds of outrageous things just to try and stand out for a few fleeting seconds. Sometimes the companies look silly, and sometimes they look clever. The line between the two is, at times, too close to call. The establishment of a strong company identity eliminates the need to resort to gimmicks just to get your company's identity in front of your market. By standing for something and reinforcing those values through your image, your products, and your marketing, your company's identity will be firmly established. Customers will respond to your devotion to your values and appreciate your consistency.

4. Image is Your Soul

Companies succeed because they gain the momentum necessary to take on a life of their own. They become so meaningful to their customers that they have soul. This soul should not be betrayed by company neglect or extreme shifts in identity. By developing and maintaining an image, by keeping it active and relevant, a company will enjoy an ongoing and committed relationship with its customers. The absence of soul is an absence of passion. Without passion customers have very little reason to get excited.

5. Image is a Great Communication Tool

Image speaks volumes to the market. Through image a company can communicate how much it loves what it does, how committed it is to lead the market, how important its customers are, why it does what it does, and the world view it embraces. These messages are the foundations of a strong market presence and a great competitive posture. More importantly, these messages are the reasons some customers will forever buy your products. Without image you may not be saying anything at all.

6. Image is Cool

Maybe not the core reason behind developing an image, but having one is cool. This does not mean that the image you select has to that of cool. Just having an image is cool, even if it's of a nerd, because customers like attaching on to company personalities. It's cool to know who you are. It's cool to express who you are. Customers will reward your self awareness and comfort with your own identity and will reward it by treating your company like a friend.

7. Image is a Business Necessity

Even if one or more of the previous 6 reasons have not made the case for a strong company image, the fact that it is a business necessity should do the trick. The fact is that without a company image your company will get lost in the crowd and most certainly lose ground to companies that have taken the time and dedicated the resources to developing, nurturing, and maintaining a great company image. Having an image is not a strategic option, it is a marketing imperative.

Some people think it's all about image. Tudog doesn't agree. It's not all about image. It's all about marketing, and image has a role to play in marketing. Without a good image, you are going into the market without one of the components you need to succeed.