

Proactive, intelligent and friendly – that’s your brand. The trouble is, who knows it?

## MEASURING THE BRAND INTERNALLY

Advertising and marketing lay a strong foundation for perception of a brand – at least until people make contact with a company. Once people buy products or interact with company employees, their long-term impressions will be shaped by their experiences. Employees need to internalize the company brand or its image will suffer.

If “quality” is a cornerstone of your brand, but most customers have to replace your products before the warranties expire, or call center staff cannot answer their questions, customers won’t believe your brand means quality. To maintain brand integrity, a company needs to ensure its employees understand how their daily actions either reinforce or weaken the brand. An internal communicator’s role in this process goes well beyond using the logo and graphic standards correctly.

### Convert brand to behaviors

Start with the brand itself.

1. Take a look at your brand’s “personality” – the attributes that characterize the brand.
2. For each attribute, identify and quantify the current and ideal employee behaviors that either reinforce or contradict it. Consider your employees’ direct and indirect interactions with customers. For instance, how well do written responses to customer complaints reflect the brand? If you have trouble identifying these behaviors, study your customer satisfaction research. You should find a wealth of numbers and write-in comments that will spotlight which employee-related factors affect customers’ perceptions of



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3. Conduct focus groups with employees to understand which current knowledge and attitude messages affect their behavior. Then, ask them what knowledge and messages might change those behaviors.
4. Quantify these messages through a survey so you can measure your progress. Some potential measures could include:
  - How interested employees are in the brand;
  - How well informed they feel about the brand;
  - How many brand attributes they can identify on a knowledge test;
  - If they believe each of the brand attributes is appropriate;
  - If they believe each of the brand attributes is true;
  - If they believe their actions can affect the brand;
  - How often they believe senior management talks about the brand compared with how often its decisions and actions are consistent with the brand.

### Examples of internal measures

A financial services company learned that 77 percent of employees were interested in the brand and only 44 percent felt informed about it. This indicates an information gap of 33 percent of employees who wanted to know more about the brand than they did. Also, nearly one-fourth of its workforce should

be more interested in the brand.

Interviews and focus groups at a management consulting firm identified that very few executives or employees could remember any of the brand attributes, let alone understand how their actions might impact the brand. Once prompted with the attributes, both management and employees questioned the appropriateness of “youthful” as an attribute for their firm, since they said “experience” or “wisdom” would be of more value to their clients. Also, many weren’t sure what two of the other attributes – “savvy” and “agile” – actually meant.

Research at a semiconductor manufacturer found that only 50 percent of employees felt they were rewarded for being innovative, which was a cornerstone of the company’s brand. The numbers were only slightly higher among two subgroups: 62 percent in Asia Pacific and 65 percent among local and corporate senior leaders.

A content analysis of a global employee magazine found that only some of the brand attributes were mentioned regularly, while others were virtually invisible, as shown in Figure One.

In summary, if the right brand messages aren’t sent to employees, there’s not much hope that they will take the right actions to lead customers to believe in their brand.

Figure One: Content analysis of brand attributes in an employee magazine

