

THE DONALD COOPER CORPORATION

Speaking and coaching internationally on management, marketing and profitability



Management tool #B-12[©]

CREATING OR CLARIFYING OUR POWERFUL BRAND:

Introduction: Businesses with a powerful 'brand' typically have more loyal customers and higher profits. Every industry and market is over-served and under-differentiated. Whether you're a retailer, manufacturer, distributor or service provider, there are too many other people selling what you're selling. That's your biggest problem.

To succeed, you must deliver compelling value and experiences and live by a set of values that will 'grab' your target customers, clearly differentiate you from your competitors, make you 'famous'...and grow your bottom line. So, realistically, what are you famous for? People are attracted to 'famous'. 'Famous' is good. If you're not famous for something, you're probably a boring commodity...and that is not good!

Simply put, you must create a powerful brand. But there is lots of confusion as to what a brand actually is. On the surface a brand is a company or product name, a graphic logo or catchy slogan. But these are just memorable icons designed to trigger a powerful set of assumptions and emotions about such things as quality, service, price, value and integrity...and about who we are if we purchase your brand.

Here is my simple but effective brand definition:

Your 'brand' is a promise to deliver a consistent set of values, qualities, standards and experiences that your target customers want in their lives.

That's it. Do you have a clear and compelling 'promise'? Do you always keep it? Do you effectively communicate it? That is the subject of this Biz Tool. Before proceeding with the step-by-step process it will be important to read Donald's article on, '**The 3 steps to creating your winning brand**' at the back of this 'Tool'.

1. Who are our various target customer groups?

Note: Using the spaces below, list and briefly define each of our target customer groups by what it is they're really trying to do (functionally, emotionally and financially) when choosing, buying, using and, in some cases, recycling or disposing of what we sell. (You may have more than 4 target customer groups)

- a) _____ who want to _____
_____.
- b) _____ who want to _____
_____.
- c) _____ who want to _____
_____.
- d) _____ who want to _____
_____.

2. What is our clear and compelling Brand Promise?

a) What specific and compelling functional, emotional and financial value and extraordinary customer experiences will we always deliver that will 'grab' our target customers, clearly differentiate us from our competitors, make us 'famous'...and grow our bottom line? What has never been done before? What would disrupt our industry and give us an 'unfair' competitive advantage?

What products, services, amenities, coaching, help, tips, encouragement, reminders, follow-up, policies and perks will differentiate us? How will we eliminate confusion, deliver convenience, reduce stress and create joyful experiences?

b) What values will we live by and be known for that will make a powerful emotional connection with each of our target customer groups?

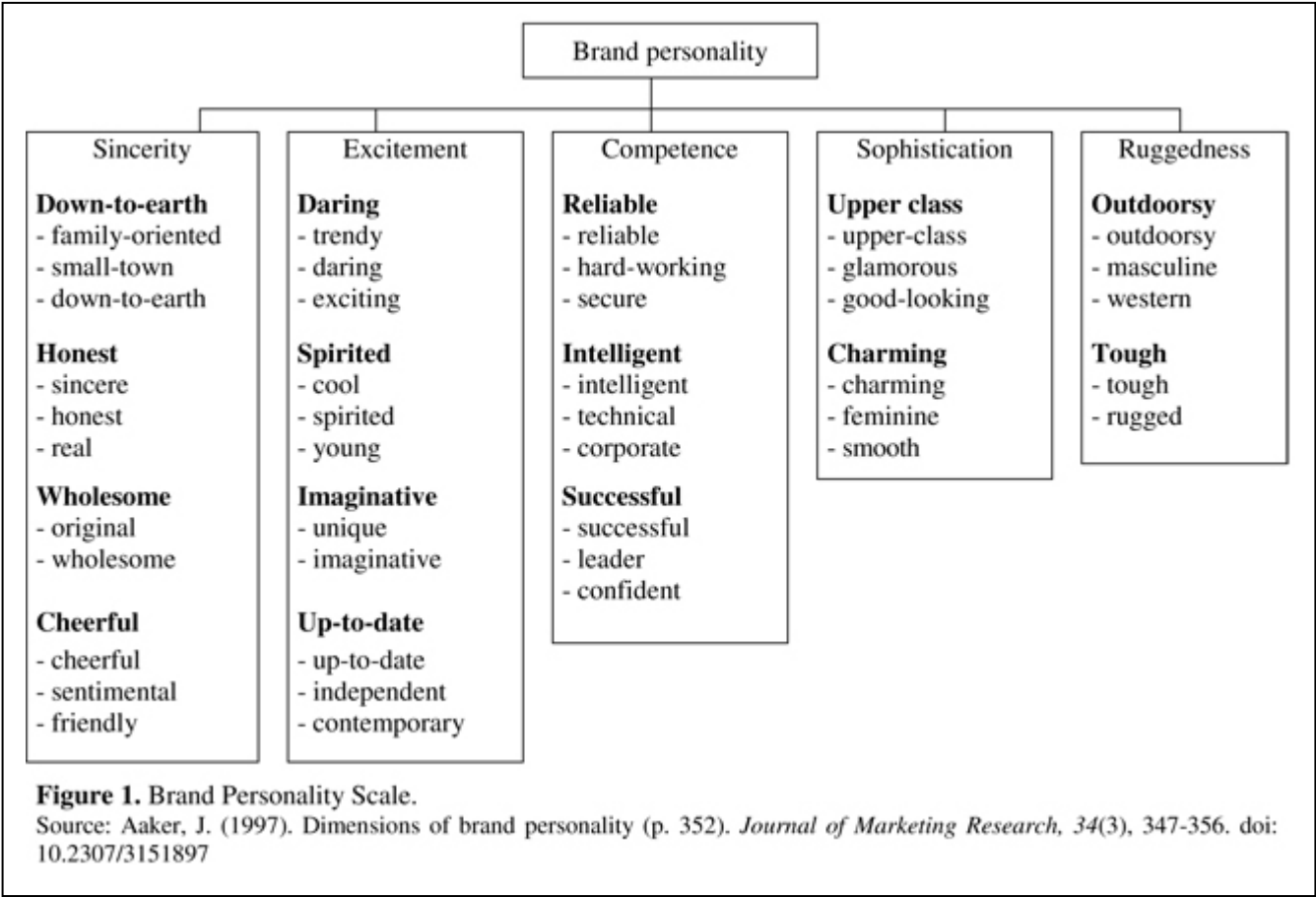
Note: Your brand promise must be deliverable, sustainable and profitable. Don't make a promise that you can't keep. (You may have more than 10 specific promises about the value and experiences you commit to deliver and the values that you'll live by).

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.
6. _____.
7. _____.
8. _____.
9. _____.
10. _____.
11. _____.
12. _____.

2. What is our Brand Personality?

Will we be 'serious, polished and formal' or 'friendly, informal and fun'? Or, perhaps, 'outrageous and flamboyant'...or some wonderful combination of some of those 'personality traits'. What 'personality' will differentiate us, connect us with our target customers, make them comfortable with us...and make us attractive and memorable to them? If our brand was a person, would we be Madonna or Martha Stewart...Bill Clinton or Bill Gates?

Using the '**Brand Personality Checklist Tool**' on the following page as inspiration and then document your Brand Personality on the blank lines below it.



Describe our Brand Personality below:

3. Do we always deliver our Brand Promise at every touch point...and are we always true to our Brand Personality and Brand Values?

Brand delivery check-up: In what specific areas of our business are we not always delivering our Brand Promise and being true to our Brand Personality and Brand Values? To be accurate and complete, answering this important question will likely require a careful look at the customer experience we're currently delivering at every 'touch-point'. Start by listing each 'touch-point' where our products and services, our advertising and promotion or our brand come into contact with our target customers in any way. Who will be responsible for this project? When do we commit to have this 'Customer Experience Audit' completed?

4. Specifically what must we do to more effectively deliver our Brand Promise, Brand Personality and Brand Values at every 'touch point'?

Note: For each 'touch-point' where our products and services, our advertising and promotion or our brand come into contact with our target customers in any way, specifically what must we do to delight and amaze our target customers and turn them into fans? Remember, mediocrity is no longer an option (Use extra sheets of paper where required. There will be over dozens of 'touch-points').

Touch-point	What must be done to deliver our Brand Promise, Personality & Values:
1. _____	a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____
2. _____	a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____
3. _____	a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____
4. _____	a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____
5. _____	a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____

6) How will we communicate, market and promote our Brand Promise, Brand Personality and Brand Values at every 'touch-point'?

Be congruent...be consistent...be authentic: *"We are what we communicate."* Every part of your brand communication must be congruent with your brand promise, personality and values. You must be authentic. Sending out confusing or conflicting 'brand messages' will severely damage our brand. Every part of our communication should help us achieve our 6 communication objectives:

Our 6 communications objectives:

1. To be immediately noticed and recognized and then remembered by our target customers.
2. To be clearly understood and differentiated.
3. To eliminate confusion and stress.
4. To build trusting relationships and emotional connections.
5. To create a buying decision.
6. To add long-term value to our Brand.

7 categories of business communication:

Although there are 100s of ways that we communicate who we are, there are 7 broad categories of business communication, shown below. Using the boxes beside each, honestly evaluate on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being 'excellent', how effective we are in each of these communication categories.

- ☐ 1. How we **'look'** in every part of our business communicates our standards, our style and our sense of self. How we 'look' creates or destroys confidence.
- ☐ 2. How we **'sound'**...*"We are what we speak."* How we 'sound' in person, on the phone, on our website, in our ads, on our blogs and on Social Media communicates how much we know and how much we care. How we 'sound' creates or destroys confidence and builds or destroys relationships.
- ☐ 3. How we **serve, coach and perform** communicates 'loud & clear' how important we think our customers are.
- ☐ 4. The **price** we charge communicates what we think we're worth. And in both our business and our personal lives, nobody will think we're worth more than we do.
- ☐ 5. How and where we **advertise and promote**.
- ☐ 6. How we **care** for each other and the planet communicates where our corporate 'soul' is.
- ☐ 7. How our business **'feels'** matters. How we 'feel' communicates if we are welcoming, safe and professional to do business with. To quote American poet Maya Angelou, *"People may not remember what you say or what you do...but they will always remember how you made them feel."*

48 ways that a business can communicate:

Note: We'll use this checklist to jumpstart our creativity as to how we can create a comprehensive value and Brand communication program. For each of the communications possibilities that we chose to be part of our program, what might 'extraordinary' look like?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our business or brand name...and product names. | <input type="checkbox"/> Our vehicles. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our Logo. | <input type="checkbox"/> Promotions & special events. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our Brand promise and Brand personality. | <input type="checkbox"/> Create workshops and seminars. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our positioning statement. | <input type="checkbox"/> Diplomas, certificates. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our products & services...quality, selection. | <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of reference. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our prices. | <input type="checkbox"/> Biz cards, letterhead. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our sale and promotional strategy. | <input type="checkbox"/> Info or demo videos. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merchandise presentation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Our Guarantee. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Packaging, tags & labels. | <input type="checkbox"/> E-Directories...Yellow pages. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catalogues and brochures. | <input type="checkbox"/> Direct snail mail...Direct e-mail. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our Website. | <input type="checkbox"/> Sampling / "test driving". |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blogs, Newsletters and E-blasts from us. | <input type="checkbox"/> Mascot. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of Social Media by us. | <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrity endorsements. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blogs, Newsletters and Social Media by others. | <input type="checkbox"/> Ad specialties. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The phone...how we answer + outbound calls. | <input type="checkbox"/> Sales calls to customers & prospects. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our premises...the design, location, size, lighting. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-on-1 coaching of customers. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Signage...inside and out. | <input type="checkbox"/> Trade or consumer shows. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our Staff...how they look, sound and serve. | <input type="checkbox"/> Media exposure (PR). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uniforms / badges. | <input type="checkbox"/> Movie & TV product placement. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising...print, radio, TV, billboard, internet, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsoring teams, special events or competitions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write articles for trade mags or local media. | <input type="checkbox"/> Joint promotions with complimentary product or service providers. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer 'Club Membership' with privileges. | <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in community events. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Algorithm driven customized special offers. | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving back to our community. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking at industry events or to customer groups. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creating contests or competitions. | |

Our key brand message will be:

Our brand slogan will be:

Done right, brand slogans are short, powerful, memorable, quick positioning statements that grab attention, state the essence of the brand and are memorable and repeatable. A few examples:

- *"When you care enough to send the very best!"*....Halmark Cards.
- *"Find fabulous for less!"*...Winners Discount Fashion Stores.
- *"Save money...live better!"*....WalMart.
- *"Just do it!"*....Nike.
- *"Like it never even happened."*....ServePro Disaster Clean-up.

Our short, powerful, memorable, quick **brand slogan** that will grab attention, state the essence of our brand and be memorable, catchy and repeatable could be... (write a few until you get one that grabs you...get your team to help...or get outside help).

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____

Our brand logo will be:

Our brand logo is an immediately recognizable and identifiable graphic image that triggers a set of positive assumptions and emotions about the brand and about who we are if we buy it. The Nike 'swoosh', the Apple 'apple' and the McDonald's 'golden arches' are, perhaps, three of the world's most recognizable brands

Now that we're clear about 'who we are', how might we go about creating or updating our brand logo?

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3 simple steps to creating your powerful Brand:

Businesses with a powerful 'brand' typically have more loyal customers and higher profits. Every industry and market is over-served and under-differentiated. Whether you're a manufacturer, retailer, distributor or service provider, there are too many other people selling what you're selling. That's your biggest problem. So, you need to become 'famous' for something that really matters to your target customers and you need to deliver that every day. People are attracted to 'famous'. 'Famous' is good.

So, to succeed, you must deliver compelling value and experiences and live by a set of values that will 'grab' your target customers, clearly differentiate you from your competitors, make you 'famous'...and grow your bottom line. In short, you must create a powerful brand.

But there's lots of confusion as to what a brand actually is. On the surface a brand is just a company or product name, a graphic logo or catchy slogan. But these are simply memorable icons designed to trigger a powerful set of assumptions and emotions about such things as quality, service, price, value and integrity...and about who we are if we purchase your brand.

Here's my simple but effective brand definition. **Your 'brand' is a promise to deliver a consistent set of values, qualities, standards and experiences that your target customers want in their lives.** That's it. Do you have a clear and compelling 'promise'...and are you keeping it?

Creating your winning brand is actually a simple 3 step process...but very few businesses 'get it'. The hotel industry is a great example. I was in a magnificent, uplifting Westin Hotel on the Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas recently and then, one week later, in an absolutely depressing Westin Hotel in Atlanta that felt like a prison on a bad day! No brand clarity. No brand consistency. Just confusion and doubt. That's no way to build a brand.

3 steps to creating
your powerful brand:
DECIDE
DELIVER
COMMUNICATE

The 3 steps to creating a powerful brand in your business are '**DECIDE, DELIVER and COMMUNICATE**'.

1. First, **DECIDE** who your customers will be and what clear and compelling **Brand Promise** will 'grab' those target customers, clearly differentiate you from your competitors, make you 'famous'...and grow your bottom line. You can't be compelling to everyone, so don't even try. It will confuse and dilute your brand.

Next, you must understand what life is *really* like for each group of target customers you chose to serve. Below are four questions to help with that understanding. When each of your target customer groups is choosing, buying, using, recycling or disposing of the products or services you sell:

- Functionally, emotionally and financially, what are they **really trying to do**?
- What do they **want or need to know** to wisely choose, effectively use and (in some cases) recycle or dispose of what you sell? What kind of info, coaching, reminders or encouragement do they need?
- How do they want to **feel** when choosing, buying and using what you sell?
- About how much do they **expect to pay**?

Now, using your 'new and improved' understanding of each of your target customer groups, decide specifically what 'promises' your brand will make about the compelling **value and customer experience** you'll always deliver and the **values** you'll always live by. Remember, your market is over-served and under-differentiated, so you must be extraordinary. Mediocrity is no longer an option.

Next, decide on your Brand Personality: When you're clear about your Brand Promise, you need to decide on your Brand Personality. Will you be 'serious, polished and formal' or 'friendly, informal and fun'? Or, perhaps, 'outrageous and flamboyant'...or some wonderful combination of some of those 'personality traits'. What 'personality' will differentiate you, connect with your target customers, make them comfortable with you...and make you attractive and memorable to them? If your brand was a person, would you be Madonna or Martha Stewart...Bill Clinton or Bill Gates? If you don't know exactly who you are, how will your target customers know who you are?

2. Step #2, you must **DELIVER** what you promise! For **every** 'touch-point' at which your customers interact with your business, your products and services or your brand in any way, get specific about the kind of experience you'll always deliver. Then, put in place the culture, the people, training, physical infrastructure, amenities, systems, policies and processes required to deliver your brand.

Make sure that everything you do is consistent with your brand promise and brand values. I recently attended an 'Info Session' for new Lexus owners at one of Canada's largest Lexus dealers. This event ran from 6:30 to 8:30 PM and 'refreshments would be served'. The Lexus brand promise is 'the relentless pursuit of excellence' in both their vehicles and the customer experience, but at this evening event, the 'food' consisted of two plastic trays of sandwiches, some cut up fruit and a bottle of water. Nobody who can afford a Lexus eats sandwiches for dinner. Nobody. They failed to be congruent with their brand promise. Trust me, this stuff matters. Everything matters.

Every person you hire, every product or service you offer, every ad or promotion you run, every policy you create and decision you make affects your brand. In fact, everything you do, every day, either delivers and honors your Brand Promise, or it damages your brand. Everyone in the business is a Brand Ambassador. They need to understand and embrace what that means.

It takes time to build a powerful brand...but it can be quickly destroyed, as Volkswagen discovered in 2015 when it was revealed that they sold over 11 million 'clean' diesel vehicles that had intentionally been programmed to circumvent accepted emission standards. These 11 million vehicles were emitting up to 40 times the pollutants allowed, and they got caught. In their relentless drive to become the world's largest carmaker, they lost their moral compass. Volkswagen now faces billions of dollars in penalties and their brand is on life support.



3. Step #3: Finally, you must effectively **COMMUNICATE** your Brand Promise. There's no point being the best, if you're also the best kept secret. Many businesses think of their brand communication as the advertising and promotion that they do. But, in fact, everything you do communicates a message, good or bad, about your brand. And, through Social Media, the general public is now a powerful partner in managing your brand reputation.

Your 6 communication objectives:

1. To be immediately noticed, recognized and remembered by your target customers.
2. To be clearly understood and differentiated.
3. To eliminate confusion and stress.
4. To build trusting relationships and emotional connections.
5. To create a buying decision.
6. To add long-term value to your Brand.

Be congruent...be consistent...be authentic: Every part of your brand communication must be congruent and consistent with your brand promise, personality and values. Speak to your customers as a group...and with the help of technology, interact with them as individuals. Sending out confusing or conflicting 'brand messages' will severely damage your brand. Being 'authentic' is key. Today's customers can spot a 'brand phony' very quickly.

The 7 'categories' of communication:

There are literally 100's of ways that you communicate who you are and what you stand for, but they fall into 7 main categories...

1. How you **look** in every part of your business.
2. How you **'sound'** in every part of your business.
3. How you and your products and services **serve and perform**.
4. The **price** you charge communicates powerfully what you think you're worth.
5. How and where you **advertise and promote**.
6. How you **care** for others and the planet communicates your values.
7. How your business **'feels'** when people interact with your brand in any way.

Note: On Page #6 of this 'Brand Tool' there's a check list of 48 different ways you can communicate your value story and connect with customers.

4. **Conclusion:** So, there you have our 3 clear steps. Creating, delivering and communicating your powerful brand is important. Remember, businesses with a powerful 'brand' typically have more loyal customers and higher profits. Your industry and market are over-served and under-differentiated. A clear and powerful Brand Promise, supported by a strong Brand Personality and strong Brand Values will give you the competitive edge you need.

Now that you've read this info, return to Page #1 to start the step-by-step process of creating or clarifying your powerful Brand.

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