
Build Your Brand by Operationalizing It

BY DENISE LEE YOHN, ON OCTOBER 26TH, 2010

By
Special
Guest
Blogger
Denise
Lee Yohn

What's
the key
to
building
a strong
brand?



39
tweets

retweet

To find out, my colleagues and I surveyed senior brand executives at over 70 major firms across a range of industries. We asked them what business practices are key to successful brand strategy development and successful brand execution.

Factors such as “having a strong vision that inspires others,” “removing organizational silos that impede the strategy,” and “reviewing consumer touchpoints to ensure they are appropriate” were all rated as “very” or “critically” important by nearly all survey participants. No activity was clearly unimportant.

The surveyed executives seemed to believe that what’s needed to achieve brand success is to do everything. The problem is, with limited resources and limited budgets, you can’t do everything. Doing everything is not the answer; doing different things is.

Currently **most brand-building initiatives skew toward externally-targeted practices**. How do I know?

In the same research, we asked the research participants about the ways they measure their company’s effectiveness in developing and executing brand strategy. Their responses revealed that most companies only engage in measuring external brand activities, like fielding brand health tracking studies with consumers and quantifying the impact of advertising and promotion campaigns on brand equity. In fact, the only measures used by more than 50% of the surveyed companies were external ones.

Approximately one-third or fewer reported “measuring how well the strategy is understood internally,” “evaluating individual employees on how well they support the strategy,” or other internal effectiveness metrics. Given

the business adage “you manage what you measure,” these findings about brand measurement support the conclusion that most companies are only managing external brand-building activities.

I'd like to suggest that instead of thinking about brand-building as an externally-oriented activity, we shift to more **internally-directed efforts**. ***That is, instead of telling people who we are and what we do, focus on who we actually are and what we actually do.***

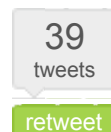
Organizations must stop only using brands as outward-facing, image-oriented messages. Instead of thinking about marketing our brands, think about operationalizing them. The dictionary defines “**operationalize**” as “to put into operation, start working.” So operationalizing your brand means putting it into the operations of your company and making it something that people can work with, for the purposes of achieving results. Simply put, **to operationalize your brand is to use it as a business tool.**

Importantly, this notion differs from “bringing the brand to life,” a common colloquialism in marketing circles. Usually the call to bring a brand “to life” is issued by someone who wants to express the brand more creatively or vividly, perhaps through story-telling or a special experience. These efforts are usually conceived and undertaken as discrete initiatives, separate from the core function of the business.

Operationalizing the brand, on the other hand, is **about integrating the brand and your core company’s operating system**. Your brand can shape business objectives and goals, facilitate strategic planning, and guide the prioritization of strategies and initiatives and the allocation of resources. It can expose new growth opportunities, give birth to new products or services, and soften the beachhead for entry into new markets. It can help get the right people in your organization focused on the right things. It can shape your corporate culture, inform policies and processes, and rally your stakeholders. It can foster the unity, focus, and alignment necessary for operational excellence.

Operationalizing your brand is about **using it as a business tool, not simply a marketing asset**. Doing so will transform brand-building from a costly, discrete, and subjective activity into the most integral way of managing and growing your business.

Share on Facebook



[BRANDING](#), [MARKETING](#), [MARKETING STUDIES](#), [BRAND BUILDING](#), [BRANDING ADVICE](#), [DENISE LEE YOHN](#), [EXECUTIVE MARKETING ADVICE](#), [MARKETING EXECUTIVES](#), [MARKETING EXECUTIVES NETWORKING GROUP](#), [MARKETING NETWORKING GROUP](#), [MENG](#), [NETWORKING](#), [OPERATIONALIZE YOUR BRAND](#)





Author: **Denise Lee Yohn**

Denise Lee Yohn has been inspiring and teaching companies how to operationalize their brands to grow their businesses for over 20 years. World-class brands and extraordinary retailers including Sony, Jack In the Box, Frito-

Lay, Burger King, and Road Runner Sports have called on Denise, an established consultant, speaker, and writer. Visit www.deniseleeyohn.com.

Other posts by **[Denise Lee Yohn](#)**

*MENG is the indispensable community of executive-level marketers who share their passion and expertise to ensure each member's success. **[Learn more](#)** ... **[Apply for membership](#)** ...*
