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Event Recap: These 4 Characteristics Define What Great Brands Do

By [Red Door](#) on April 01, 2014 | [Events](#) |



We can all name a brand that has our hearts, and as Denise Lee Yohn might say, has seduced us as loyal brand advocates. At our recent Speaker Series, Denise started her presentation with a candid look into how Nike seduced her and as a result is the only brand of running shoes she will wear. With an audience eager to find out what successful brands are doing differently, Denise introduced 4 essential characteristics that differentiate good brands from great brands.



1. Great brands start on the inside

Start your brand building by creating a strong corporate culture. Often times, companies will set out to revamp

their current culture by re-branding themselves through public relations, marketing and advertising. These surface efforts are a quick way to change what you say about your company, rather than change the company itself. Having strong internal values and developing greatness in employees, will allow them to deliver greatness to customers.

2. Great brands don't chase customers

You can't create passionate brand advocates by appealing to everyone. Denise identified Red Bull as a brand that has created an exclusive appeal through its ultra-premium pricing and clear brand identity. "We don't bring the people to the product. We make it available and those who love our style come to us," says Red Bull CEO Dietrich Mateschitz. In this way, Red Bull projects its strong identity to the world like a "lighthouse" to attract loyal customers. Other brands, function like a "spotlight," segmenting the market through data and analysis which can pull brands outside of their intended message and competencies. Great brands use the lighthouse approach, seeking customers that share their values, and not wasting time on those who don't.

3. Great brands avoid selling products

Consumers base their purchases on how brands make them feel and great brands tap into these emotions by focusing on the consumer, not the product. Bringing it back to Denise's love of Nike, the "Just Do It" tagline, transcended from what athletes do- sweat, run, jog, to various life experiences. Customers were inspired to change their lives, a testament to how seducing through emotion trumps selling products.

4. Great brands never have to give back

Corporate Social Responsibility has increasingly become a priority for large corporations and there is nothing wrong with "giving back". However, great brands have adopted socially responsible practices that are integrated into their models, so that they are inherently creating a greater social value. For example, Patagonia's supply chain is focused on reducing environmental harm because their mission is to "implement solutions to the environmental crisis." The day to day operations, backed by socially responsible thinking, allow brands to move from good to great, without having to give back.

Denise's electrifying presentation came to a close and we had some introspective time to ask ourselves, does my company operate like a lighthouse or a spotlight? Can I create positive internal corporate change to fuel my brand identity? Needless to say, Denise left us with a lasting impression and valuable lessons to take to the office. It was rewarding to see Red Door's values come to life by providing an opportunity to share this knowledge, and leave our attendees inspired to choose to be great.

If you would like more information on what Denise discussed or want to know her other three brand-building principles, check out her book [What Great Brands Do](#). You can also follow her on twitter [@deniseleeyohn](#). Look out for our upcoming speaker series announcement!