

## The Business Reset Button



*By Denise Lee Yohn*

**It's time** to hit the reset button on business.

The recession may be ending but consumer spending remains at record lows; credit markets remain tight, capital still scarce. If this is the new reality for business, then it's clear doing business as usual is no longer an option.

Paul Laudicina, A.T. Kearney's Chairman says, *"The most important thing any company could or should be doing now to prepare for the post-recession environment is to look at all of the fundamentals and reexamine what changes in the theory of business might mean for their core competencies, for their ability to meet the new consumer demand."*

Business leaders need a new management strategy – one which is more in tune with the changing market and which optimizes the company's core operating system in meeting demand.

There's a need:

- for new ways to create new value. Companies need to identify new revenue streams and seize the right ones.
- to re-ignite topline growth while continuing to manage costs. Advertising and marketing is back in play but they need to do more with less.
- to re-engage employees. Layoffs and budget cuts have caused employees to become distracted and their work, unfocused. Workforces need to be motivated, aligned, and productive.

**"Brand as business" -- a management approach which involves the deliberate and systematic management of the business around the brand -- is the ultimate reset button.**

In short, business leaders need fresh ideas and a new business model to help their organizations become more nimble, efficient, and focused.

**"Brand as business™"** is the ultimate business reset button.

"Brand as business" is a management approach which involves the deliberate and systematic management of the business around the brand.

Most leaders might think their brand is their logo, or their image or message. But a brand really is a bundle of values and attributes that define:

- a product or service's **value** that is **delivered to its customers**, and
- **the way of doing business** that is the basis of a company's relationships with stakeholders

In other words, the brand is what the company's core operating system – its strategies and systems, your processes and procedures, and capabilities and culture -- produces and delivers to its customers. Simply put, a brand is **what** a company does and **how** it does it.

So building a brand doesn't mean spending money on "branding" activities like new logo designs or splashy advertising campaigns -- it involves improving what the company delivers to its customers and how it runs its business.

### Doing "Brand as Business"

The "brand as business" management approach gives the brand a broader business

#### "brand as business" in action

**Jack in the Box** is the quick-service restaurant (QSR) chain with 2100+ units in 18 states. Executives at Jack in the Box explain, "We are a challenger brand. We use innovation and a likeable brand personality to turn customers into loyal fans."

The chain's three-pronged brand identity – challenger, innovator, likeable – isn't only embodied in Jack, the CEO character of their award-winning advertising campaign. It's present in all aspects of their business.

For example, Jack in the Box is known for bucking tradition when it comes to product development. It was the first QSR to offer a breakfast sandwich, a portable salad and an all-sirloin burger. It recently undertook a store re-design to more closely integrate its creative and charismatic brand identity into the in-store experience. And corporate leaders use "Jackisms" (quotes or phrases said by Jack) to inspire brand behavior by employees ("Trust me, a smile goes a long way toward making a successful business. – Jack".)

application than simply a marketing message – the brand becomes a management tool. With "brand as business," you take all of the characteristics of a strong brand -- meaningfulness, differentiation, believability, transcendence (i.e., conveying value beyond any one specific offering) -- and run your company operations so you deliver them.

From using the brand to generate shared insights about the business, to facilitating superior planning decisions with the brand, to applying the brand to ensure consistent and efficient execution -- the brand becomes driver and compass for everything the company does:

- The brand shapes business objectives and goals and facilitates the prioritization of strategies and initiatives and the allocation of resources.
  - The brand exposes new growth opportunities, gives birth to new products or services, and softens the beachhead for entry into new markets.
- It helps get the right people in the organization and focuses their energy on the right things.
  - It defines corporate culture, informs policies and processes, and rallies all of the company's and brand's stakeholders.

## The Case for “Brand As Business”

In a recent study conducted by the Association of National Advertisers researchers found 64% of Chief Marketing Officers and brand managers said their brands do not influence decisions made at their companies. That means nearly two-thirds of companies are pouring millions of dollars on marketing and advertising without grounding their business in market insight and the customer experience they’re promoting.

However when the brand guides for all business activities, it produces far-reaching and long-lasting results:

- ✓ attracting and retaining more customers because your offerings have stronger differentiation and are not as easily copied
- ✓ sustaining price premiums and higher margins because customers perceive you’re delivering a higher value
- ✓ having more efficient and effective business processes because employees and their activities are integrated, aligned, and focused
- ✓ increasing the market value of the business to investors, producing higher valuations based on stronger customer equity, more efficient business processes, and intangibles (e.g., emotional resonance)
- ✓ experiencing better results in recruiting, training, and retention because you’re clearer about what’s expected of employees and what it takes for them to be successful
- ✓ having more negotiation power with suppliers, channels, and M&A prospects due to your customer leverage
- ✓ making a more significant and lasting impact (e.g., challenging the business norms in your category, creating an extraordinary employee culture, etc.)

To realize these widespread and substantial benefits, business leaders must think about – and use -- their brand differently. The brand must be more than an awareness generator and goodwill producer. The brand must be operationalized.

The time is right for a new management approach – one that transforms brand-building from a costly, discrete, and subjective activity into the most integral way of managing and growing a business.

Learn more about “brand as business” -- Book Denise to present to your organization her new keynote address: **“RESET: Jumpstart Your Recovery with the “Brand as Business” Approach.”**

*Denise Lee Yohn is a national speaker, author, and independent **brand as business**™ consulting partner who has worked with clients like Sony, Burger King, and Nautica to operationalize their brands to grow their businesses. Read more by Denise at <http://www.deniseleeyohn.com/resources.html> .*