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Balancing business expansion and brand preservation may be one of the toughest tightrope acts in business. Growth means increasing the number of people who make decisions, which impacts the brand experience on a daily basis. This naturally leads to more inconsistencies in the delivery of that experience. Growing also involves making trade-offs: Do you accept slightly lower levels of quality in order to manage escalating costs? Do you modify your product slightly in order to meet new customers' demands? And, at some point most companies invariably cross the line between brand extensions that make sense and ones that are "off brand." Ultimately the pursuit of growth often leads organizations into dangerous branding territory. So what's a brand-conscious, yet growth-oriented company to do?

Here are some guidelines for making sure everyone in your growing business is on the same page when it comes to your brand.

Clearly articulate the brand. Everyone in your business must share a singular vision of your brand. Don't simply assume employees will "do the right thing" or your department heads "get it"—not to mention your suppliers, channel partners, agencies and other people who you rely on to deliver your brand.

Write down your brand's values and attributes, such as target market, origin, unique benefits and key differentiators, and distribute this document. Consider initiating an internal communications campaign so that they become even more familiar and engaged with your brand. The maxim about saying something seven times before people get it definitely applies!

Help employees embrace and live the brand. It's not enough for your employees to know about the brand, they also need to understand how to interpret and reinforce it in their daily actions and decision-making. **A brand toolbox** can be quite effective, and should:

- Explain the brand platform, along with the background and rationale so that people will understand and buy into it
- Outline principles and examples to guide appropriate brand execution
- Relay inspiring stories to connect people with the brand on an emotional level
- Help people make decisions and take actions that are "on brand," through interactive exercises, decision guides and sample behavioral scenarios. For example, you might provide a list of "must-make" points for your sales staff, sample social media posts, or a "Partner Program Guide" to help your managers decide what companies to partner with.

Hold company-wide brand engagement sessions. These interactive work-sessions help all departments and groups realize that they have as much impact on how the brand is perceived as does the marketing department. Brand engagement sessions should be held at every level and for every function in your company.

Include hands-on exercises like a brand quiz and immersive experiences like a "day in the life of a customer" to reinforce your brand. Then assist the group in identifying areas that need change, and develop solutions using the brand as a guide for decision-making. For example, your procurement department might need to rethink aspects of the supply chain in order to scale product sourcing while reinforcing the brand's quality and design standards. Make sure you lay out specific actions, target

dates and delivery goals to achieve the required change.

There are numerous stories of failed companies that aggressively pursued growth while diminishing their brand quality and distinctiveness. Business ambitions don't have to be stifled to maintain, or even strengthen, your brand—with a little planning and targeted tools in place you can have it both ways.