

# Brand Your Brand Through Actions Not Advertising

June 17, 2015

Today's guest blogger is Denise Lee Yohn, a leading authority on building and positioning exceptional brands. Denise is the author of the bestselling book [What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles that Separate the Best from the Rest](#). Read more by Denise at <http://deniseleeyohn.com/bites/best-bites>.

If you're investing time and money into branding strategies that don't seem to be making a difference, you're not alone. Most business leaders are frustrated by the lack of return they're seeing on their advertising dollars. And yet some companies enjoy rapid growth and success with minuscule marketing budgets. What are the leaders at these organizations doing that so you should also do?

Great brands consider their brands as verbs, not nouns. They don't use their brands simply as external images promoted through advertising and communications. Instead, they use their brands to shape:

- the internal **culture** they cultivate — using a purpose and values to inspire employees and customers alike
- the **core operations** they run — creating customer relationships that are meaningful, valuable, and sustainable
- the **customer experiences** they deliver — making differentiating and emotional connections with customers

They conceive of and use their brands as *what they do and how they do it*.

This means that the stewards of the brand don't reside in the marketing or advertising department; they're at the highest levels of the organization. These leaders ensure their organization delivers the brand identity and core values through everything they do, every day, all day. They recognize that brands are built through actions, not advertising.

When you use your brand as the central organizing and operating idea of your company, it makes it easy for everyone who works on your brand — from your executive team to frontline employees to business partners — to know how to nurture and reinforce it because everyone shares a common understanding of the value you're creating. It makes it clear what to do and what not to do, so no one wastes time, money, and resources on things that don't align with and contribute to that value.

By shifting your concept of *brand* from noun to verb, you also allow for constant evolution. When you think of your brand not as an identity to promote but as an instrument that you fuels, aligns, and guides everything your company does, your brand values and attributes serve as inspiration for innovation into new markets, new offerings, and new categories.

In this day and age where nearly perfect, ubiquitous information allows buyers to predict quite accurately the experienced quality of products and services, people today rely less on advertising and promises of quality and more on the opinions of experts and other consumers. People no longer need a creative campaign or an attractive message to help them decide which product to buy. The influence of brands on purchase decisions seems to have diminished.

But this doesn't mean that brands have become less important. Ask the executives at Starbucks, IBM, Apple, or IKEA. The brands at these companies remain integral to their success because they develop and use their brands as more than mere messages.

You can build your brand the way great brands when if embrace the concept of operating your business based on your brand.

To learn more about building a great brand, join us for our Soundview Live webinar with Denise Lee Yohn: [What Great Brands Do](#).