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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

DENISE LEE YOHN

WHAT
GREAT
BRANDS
DO



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**WHAT GREAT
BRANDS DO:
KEYNOTE SPEAKER
AND AUTHOR**

DENISE LEE YOHN

BY JACQUELINE STEUART

BRAND-BUILDING EXPERT, SOUGHT-AFTER INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER, AND AUTHOR OF BESTSELLING BOOK WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO: THE SEVEN BRAND-BUILDING PRINCIPLES THAT SEPARATE THE BEST FROM THE REST, DENISE LEE YOHN, SHARES HER PASSION AND EXPERTISE FOR BUILDING GREAT BRANDS WITH LIFE LOUNGERS THIS MONTH. "I WANT TO SHOW A DIFFERENT WAY, A MORE EFFECTIVE, SUSTAINABLE WAY, TO BUILD A BRAND - THE WAY THAT GREAT BRANDS DO IT."

READ STORY



"It's a lot easier to change what you say about yourself than to change yourself," says Denise Lee Yohn. "Clients will come to me needing a branding strategy—they are looking for a new tagline or a new way of talking about what they do, but what they really need to do is change the way they do business themselves." Yohn says oftentimes when companies identify that they have a brand problem, they only think externally about how they are positioned or how they are talking to their customers, but they are not thinking about how or if they are engaging their employees. In other words, to make a good brand great she says the shift needs to happen internally.

Yohn, whose independent consulting business is based in San Diego, has more than 25 years' experience working in senior-level positions with companies like Frito-Lay, Oakley, and Sony Electronics Inc. helping them "to unleash their value-creating potential, improve their profitability, develop superior stakeholder relationships, and create lasting name recognition." Yohn's cumulative experience of advertising, client-led marketing, and brand strategy plus in-depth research led her to discover seven branding-building principles that great brands take to form a cohesive and comprehensive management approach she calls brand-as-business. "Great brands don't separate what they do to build their brand from what they do to build their business."

What is branding vs. brand-building?

DLY: I have a problem with the term branding because if you think about where branding came from, a time when people had cows and ranches, and to make sure no one would steal their cows ranch owners would take these sharp pointy things and sear their livestock so you knew who they belonged to. So for companies 100 or so years ago all they were doing was branding their companies by putting their name or their logo on their products so you knew who made them. But if you fast forward to today's market environment, that is not an effective way to develop relationships with customers or even an effective way to get people's attention any more.

What company's need to do today is what I call brand-building. When I talk about what great brands do, I will not be talking about logos or advertising or even creative marketing programs. I will be talking about cultivating a brand-led culture inside your organization. So when I talk to clients about brand strategy I will be talking about aligning their core strategies and operations with

Award-winning brand strategist Denise Lee Yohn is the author of two books including the 2014 bestseller *What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles That Separate the Best from the Rest*, and *Extraordinary Experiences: What Great Retail and Restaurant Brands Do*. As an authority on building exceptional brands Denise also contributes regularly to *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, and *Entrepreneur* magazines, and has been featured as an expert commentator on *USA TODAY*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, and *CNBC* just to name a few.

www.deniseleeyohn.com

their brand vision, and designing and delivering extraordinary customer experiences that differentiate their brand and bond people to it. That is the main idea I want to get across. There is a big difference between branding and brand-building.

How do you help companies build their brand?

DLY: I take a very customized approach depending on my clients' needs and the desired outcomes. The first step is to really identify what problem we are solving. Clients will often come to me with a specific question or specific problem but as I start digging around I realize that's not really the issue they have. There is a whole needs and discovery process, there is a diagnostic evaluation of their brand to really determine how their brand is performing, where the gaps are and what really needs to be addressed.

What are some common weaknesses you see in companies with brands that are struggling?

DLY: Some of the most common areas of weakness I see are a company's failure to engage, motivate, align, and inspire their employees. So companies need to make sure that their employees all share one common understanding of the brand and how each of them interprets and reinforces that in their daily decision making and behaviors. Without that level of engagement brands will never be able to inspire their customers.

How would you define what makes a brand great?

DLY: If you were to use criteria that separates good brands from the great ones it would certainly include higher profitability, lower operating costs, and true customer and employee loyalty. For example, take a brand like Apple. There are a lot of reasons it is great, but it's not simply their superior technology—that obviously plays a part, but Apple's success comes from the emotional connection it makes with its customers. Being an Apple customer says something about the customer and how the customer feels about themselves.

Why do you believe building stronger brands is important?

DLY: I believe in the power of business as a force for positive change in the world. I believe it's business people – not politicians or celebrities – who can make the most difference in this world. Whether you're a large enterprise or a small company you can really make an impact. Whether you're offering financing to under-resourced communities, helping people connect through technology with others around the world, or even just serving a really good burger, you can make someone's life better – maybe even change their life altogether. So brands really have the power to change the world.

“A strong brand enables a company to operate with integrity and excellence and deliver real value to customers.”

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned sleeveless top and a necklace, is speaking. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background is a solid purple color. A white quote is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

“WHEN I TALK ABOUT WHAT GREAT BRANDS DO, I WILL NOT BE TALKING ABOUT LOGOS OR ADVERTISING OR EVEN CREATIVE MARKETING PROGRAMS. I WILL BE TALKING ABOUT CULTIVATING A BRAND-LED CULTURE INSIDE YOUR ORGANIZATION.”