

Is branding important in the flooring sector?

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By Denise Lee Yohn, Brand Leadership Expert, Keynote Speaker and Best-Selling Author

As someone who has worked in marketing and advertising for more than 25 years, I am often asked about the importance of branding.

Actually, I don't like to use the term "branding" because I find that it is misunderstood and distorted; to the point where it is often misused. Let me start by explaining what branding is not. Building a brand is not only designing a logo, selecting corporate colors and choosing a font. It is much more fundamental. Your brand is what you do and how you do it. It has more to do with how you treat your employees and your customers than it does with the "look and feel" of your marketing materials.

In 2019, customer experience has taken on increased importance with the growing popularity of word of mouth advertising, which includes online reviews, social media and blogs. Customer experience has also increased in importance as the differences between products and services have decreased. Because your brand is your identity, and part of who you are as a company, everything that you do should be guided by what you want your brand to stand for. If you are successful, your customers become "brand evangelists," doing your marketing for you by spreading the word about your products and services.

I snuck in a reference to employees in the second paragraph. I'm not sure if you noticed that, but it is a very important point for all business owners. Regardless of the size of your company, or the sectors that you serve, employees are integral to the customer experience and are the foundation of your business. Typically, it is your employees that are on the front lines, dealing with your customers every day. Even if your employees don't interface directly with customers, they make decisions and take actions that impact what the customer experiences. All successful businesses must integrate and align their customer and employee strategies.

I have always been interested in what shapes people's perceptions, how they make decisions and what influences their behavior. I studied psychology in college and have been passionate about brands ever since I was a teenager. I have had the pleasure of working with many well-known brands — like Burger King, Land Rover, Jack in the Box, Sony, Oakley and Frito-Lay — helping them with the brand-building challenges that they face.

From these experiences, I have learned a few important lessons:

1. **Little things are critical to the authenticity of your brand.** People's opinions of your brand — your identity — are shaped not only by your strategies, but also by details in your customer experience.
2. **It is essential to create an emotional connection with your customers.** This principle applies whether you are a retailer (looking to create a comfortable shopping environment) or a manufacturer (looking to establish trusting relationships with buyers).
3. **The digital marketplace is a reality; don't fight it.** Nearly 80% of retail shoppers conduct online research before buying.^[1] I encourage all businesses to understand how your most valuable/loyal customers want to engage with you. It is Facebook, email, Twitter or Instagram? You cannot do everything, so take cues from your customers.
4. **Strong customer loyalty results in more ongoing relationships and fewer one-time transactions.** It's no surprise that satisfied customers are not only more likely to bring you repeat business, but they are also more likely to be less price-sensitive and to recommend you to others.

If you want to learn how to build a strong, valuable brand, I am delivering the opening keynote presentation — “How to Build a Rock Star Brand” — at DOMOTEX USA on Feb. 6, 2020. In my 60-minute presentation, I will be discussing some of the topics mentioned above in more detail. I will also be available afterwards, to answer your questions face-to-face in the Discussion Hub.

About DOMOTEX USA

DOMOTEX USA — taking place Feb. 5–7, 2020 in Atlanta — provides an excellent opportunity to immerse yourself in an environment where you can listen, observe, investigate, ask questions and learn; all over the course of just three days. The event also provides a unique opportunity to gain a global perspective of the flooring industry, featuring exhibitors from around the world.

Do you want to have an edge in the marketplace? Are you looking to be at the top of your game? If so, register for DOMOTEX USA today.

About Denise Lee Yohn

Denise Lee Yohn is the go-to expert on brand leadership for national media outlets, an in-demand keynote speaker and consultant, and an influential writer.

Denise is the author of the bestselling book *What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles that Separate the Best from the Rest* (Jossey-Bass), the e-book *Extraordinary Experiences: What Great Retail and Restaurant Brands Do*, and the new book *FUSION: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies* (Nicholas Brealey/Hachette Books).

Denise is a regular contributor to *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, *Entrepreneur*, *Knowledge@Wharton*, *Seeking Alpha*, and *QSR Magazine*, among others. News media, including *CNBC*, *FOX Business TV*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *NPR*, call on Denise when they want an expert point-of-view on hot business issues.

Denise has addressed business leaders around the world at corporate events such as Facebook, NFL, and Lexus, and conferences including International Consumer Electronics Show (CES), The Art of Marketing, and Sustainable Brands.

Denise served as lead strategist at advertising agencies for Burger King and Land Rover and as the marketing leader and analyst for Jack in the Box restaurants and Spiegel catalogs. Denise went on to head Sony Electronic Inc.'s first ever brand office, where she was the vice president/general manager of brand and strategy and garnered major corporate awards. Consulting clients have included Target, Oakley, Dunkin' Donuts, and other leading companies.

Outside of her professional roles, Denise counts hiking Mount Kilimanjaro, dancing with a professional ballet company and flying a helicopter as some of her greatest life experiences.

[1] Source: 25 Stats on Consumer Shopping Trends for 2019, Business2Community, March 2019;

<https://www.business2community.com/consumer-marketing/25-stats-on-consumer-shopping-trends-for-2019-02175812>.