

SHARING WHAT YOU STAND FOR

by Jennifer Stewart-Burton

At their most basic, branding and sharing what your organization stands for are about figuring out how you want your organization as a whole to be viewed by the people in your target markets. The challenge many agribusinesses face is shifting what customers already believe about the company to what the company wants them to believe.

But helping customers make that shift requires in-depth understanding of how they already view your organization. After all, your brand is much more than a logo — it's a personality.

BRAND PERSONIFICATION

There are a variety of ways to analyze your brand. According to **Scott Downey**, Associate Director of **Purdue's Center for Food and Agricultural Business**, a good place to start is with an exercise called brand personification. In other words, if your brand were a person, what would he or she be like?

It's important to be as detailed as possible when answering that question. For example, is your organization male or female? Tall, short or average? What does he or she wear? How does he or she act? What does she drive? What are his hobbies?

Brand characteristics can move from practical to emotional.

Oftentimes, brands are tied to products or products to a brand. One example of this would be a brand built on quality. While it's helpful for customers to see your products as being high quality, from a branding perspective it's more important for them to connect emotionally.

"What if your customers saw your products as responsible for their success?" Downey said.

"Emotional connections to your brand are the strongest connections. It's about your customers being able to say, 'That brand gets me.'"

One recognizable example of an advertisement with emotional

appeal is **Dodge's** 2013 Super Bowl commercial featuring **Paul Harvey's** famous address "So God Made a Farmer."

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

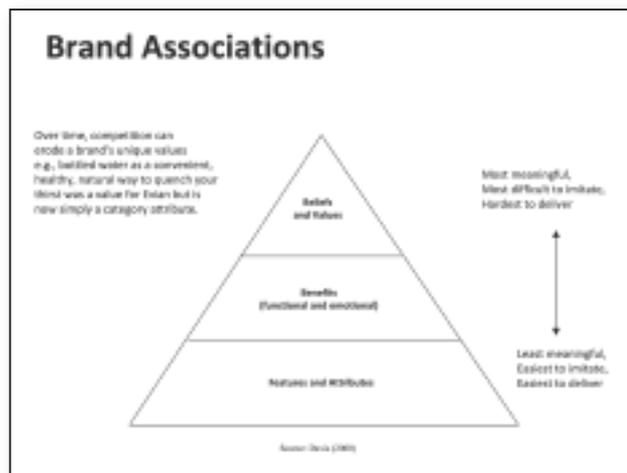
The biggest factor in shaping perceptions is consistency, Downey said.

"You have to make sure that customer experiences with the brand match what the company says about the brand," he said. "If your company claims quality, but your salespeople only talk about deals or you are selling some lower quality items, that's not consistent. If you claim quality, but your employees don't act like they care about the customers, that's not consistent."

It's also important to remember that every brand has implied promises. For example, if an organization claims to be a partner in business, how do they respond to customer complaints? Or if a seed company is branded on quality, what does that mean? Does it mean high yields? Does it mean higher germination rates? You have to know how the customer should interpret your organization's claims.

Finally, when it comes time for you to make branding decisions for your company, each decision should be evaluated on the basis of organizational goals and target audience perception. You have to determine whether the goal is to inform, persuade or remind the audience.

"If your target market doesn't know you, your goal has to be to inform them," Downey said. "If they know you, but don't see how you are different from the competition, you have to persuade them. If they know



you and they know how you're different, your goal should be to remind them."

EXECUTIVE AGRI-MARKETING

The Center for Food and Agricultural Business annually offers Executive Agri-Marketing, a program designed to help leaders responsible for marketing decisions work through brand issues and strategically frame their organizations' marketing efforts. The 2016 program runs Aug. 15-17 and focuses on best practices in marketing, the discipline of segmentation, aligning the organization with customer experience, decision tools, and putting ideas to work.

Learn more about the program, find the agenda, and register at <http://agribusiness.purdue.edu/executive-agri-marketing>. **AM**

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