

A note from us:

Guy had been watching Ryan (our web designer) eat cheese steaks from a pizzeria near the office until he could stand it no more. The next time Ryan went for a cheese steak, Guy decided to have one too.

Imagine his disappointment when he unwrapped the sandwich and it bore no resemblance to the sandwiches Ryan had been getting in the past few weeks. The roll was obviously a different type of bread, which we all know is crucial to a good cheese steak.

The week after that, cheese steak day arrived and Ryan went back to the pizzeria. When he got back to the office and unwrapped the sandwich, it looked just as it had when Guy had decided he wanted one. How frustrating!

This is a great example of how a business can get a consumer to buy, but, unless the experience lives up to the consumer's expectations the company won't get a second try.

This week's article is the final one in our series on brand values and, in my opinion, it's the most important piece. That's because it doesn't matter what you say the business is all about, nor does it matter what the advertising says. What really matters is the customer's experience. Does the business deliver on the brand or not? Here are some tips on helping staff live the brand and deliver on the brand promise every day.



Featured Article

5 Steps to take your brand values down off the walls and put them where they need to be – in the employees who live the brand.

TV commercials are annoying enough, but the ones that get on my nerves the most are the ones with the smiling, happy employees. That's because I never see those smiling, happy employees when I go there.

According to The Gallup Organization, only about a third of employees are “actively engaged” in their job. Those who are “actively engaged” are enthusiastic and perform well in their work.

The rest are either moderately engaged or actively disengaged.

Here are 5 ways to begin the process of internal brand alignment and improve employee engagement at your company.

1. Hire the best people possible.

Those soft skills that fall under the heading of “emotional intelligence” (social skills, controlling your emotions, correctly sensing what others are feeling, etc.) are critical for short and long term employee success. These skills can be tough to identify in an interview but you’ve got to make the extra effort.

Labor is the largest expense any business has, but you’ve got to pay people a living wage and create an environment where people feel valued. If you don’t do this and you manage to hire some good people, they’ll leave as soon as they’re able to.

2. Communicate, communicate, communicate

And when you think you’re done, communicate some more. We’re all consumers and we know there’s nothing quite as annoying as an employee who can’t answer any of your questions. Educate your staff about your business, your product, your services. Let them know that part of what you’re paying them for is the ability to answer the questions customers ask them. Part of your training should help them learn how to problem solve and figure out where to go for the answers.

Educate employees on the state of the business, the goals and plans you have. Challenge them to solve the problems you’re facing and you’ll be impressed with the results.

3. Use stories to illustrate your values

Identify what’s most important to your business. What are your company values? Then think of times when employees have demonstrated those values with customers and with each other. Share those stories with new hires and existing staffers. Publicize stories of people living the values in your company newsletter. Celebrate those people. It takes 7 to 10 impressions before your message gets across to consumers and it takes 7 to 10 impressions before the internal message gets across to employees.

4. Look for inconsistency between what you say is important and what you reward.

Misalignment creeps into every company when we’re not being vigilant. A great example is when you say things like “Teamwork is critical” and then you promote the person who can’t seem to get along with anyone. There are plenty of other potential points of inconsistency and you should allow employees to point them out.

5. Give them the tools to do the job

If one of your corporate values is excellent performance, then you need to have staff that are trained to perform that way.

In addition to formal training, providing top of the line equipment and supplies sends the message that the staff is important and they deserve the best tools. Labor is your biggest expense but it's also an investment that pays off handsomely. Your marketing efforts may capture customers but it's the experience they have with employees that will bring them back time and time again. It costs 80% less to get an existing customer to do business with you again, compared to the cost of obtaining a new customer.

Converting one time customers into long time customers and then into brand champions requires dedication to deliver an outstanding customer experience at every touch point. Investing in your staff is one of the best ways to help your company do just that and should be a critical part of your overall brand strategy

Your next step: Meet with your recruiters and discuss how to improve the quality of candidates obtained and how to evaluate the quality of those interviewed.

Our tele-seminar is just days away! If you haven't signed up to discover how to Kick-start Your Brand for 2007, head over to the website and get in while you're thinking of it. The registration goes from free to 49\$ at 5:01pm Eastern.

About Abiah Designs

Abiah Designs is an international award winning brand strategy / full-service marketing firm whose unique, proprietary research process creates and revitalizes brands that resonate with their target markets, leads to increased brand awareness, develops strong customer loyalty and improved market share. Visit our website (www.abiahdesigns.com) to view our portfolio, read our case studies, and begin to imagine how we can help you.

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