

A note from us

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of the tragic shootings on the campus of Virginia Tech.

We managed to survive another tax season. Is there any government agency that has a stronger brand than the IRS? For better or worse, the IRS has an image of a relentless pit bull firmly attached to our wallets.

Hopefully, your brand generates smiles not grimaces when people think of it.

Make sure you pick up a copy of Consumer Reports' May issue (on newsstands now). The cover story is "Most (and least) Reliable Brands." 950,000 readers dished about which brands work and which don't. Which list would your brand appear on?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Winnie", with a horizontal line underneath it.

Winnie Anderson

Featured Article

Can customers count on your brand?

The May issue of Consumer Reports spills the beans on the reliability of dozens of brands, detailing which in each category are most – and least – reliable.

Those that are listed on the “most repair-prone” list can’t be surprised to find themselves there. And yet, I’m sure their executives would say they’re shocked.

Whether you make products or deliver services, here’s how your brand can grow its reputation and wind up on someone’s “most reliable” list.

Step 1: Gather internal data

You can get a sense for your company’s reputation by asking front line employees about comments they hear from customers.

Look at the data for product returns or service complaints. What appears regularly? Study the data and look for patterns. Call some of those customers at random and ask them some additional questions. Have a customer service desk? Find a way to hang around, listen in, and observe what happens there. The greatest opportunity for winning a customer isn’t when you sell her the product. It’s when you solve the problem that comes up after her purchase.

Step 2: Gather external data

Go to some of your key competitors and buy their products. Use them. Make notes about what you like and don’t like. Compare your notes to the internal data you gathered about your own products. If you sell a service, hire a mystery shopping company or call your local university and hire some seniors in the marketing department. Take into consideration who your target market is.

Have those you hire use your company’s services and give them a checklist of items to use in evaluating your company. Have the same people shop your competition and give you their reactions.

Explain to them their primary job is to find all the ways the competition is better than you are.

Step 3: Sound the call to glory

Whatever the results of your research project are, don’t punish the departments involved. The leaders of your organization have to accept their role in where your company stands.

It's time to announce your organization's new goal: To become the most reliable brand in your category (or find some other adjective if "reliable" doesn't work for you). Once you establish the goal, you must then work together to define the criteria you'll use to measure your movement toward the goal.

And don't think you can do this on the cheap. If you don't fund this properly – including allowing a reasonable budget amount for staffing and training – you might as well not bother tormenting your staff with this project. They'll see it as the "flavor of the month" and you can resign yourself to appearing soon on a "least reliable" list.

Your next step: Decide if you're brave enough to conduct this experiment and if you're willing to take the appropriate action. If you're not, then develop a comfort level with being mediocre.



About Abiah

Abiah is an award winning brand strategy and full service marketing firm that helps mid-sized businesses uncover and leverage what makes them unique to become the recognized leader in their market segment. Find out more about them and take the Brand Alignment test at www.abiah.com or call them at 866-982-2424.