YOUR BRAND
is more than a logo

PART ONE OF A TWO-PART SERIES ON BRANDING BY GARY CROSS – DEFINING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BRAND AND A BRAND NAME, AND EXPLAINING HOW TO CREATE BRAND PERCEPTION AND BRING YOUR BRAND ESSENCE TO LIFE.

A lot of people, when asked about their brand, will simply flourish their business card or point to the large letters emblazoned across their building and say "there, that's my brand."

Well... no. Not really.

That's the 'brand name'. A brand name is just one component of an overall brand.

This confusion around a brand name and a brand is understandable. After all, the phrase 'branding' really got traction back in the nineteenth century. That's when ranchers in America burned their mark onto their cattle with a branding iron so people could see what cow belonged to whom.
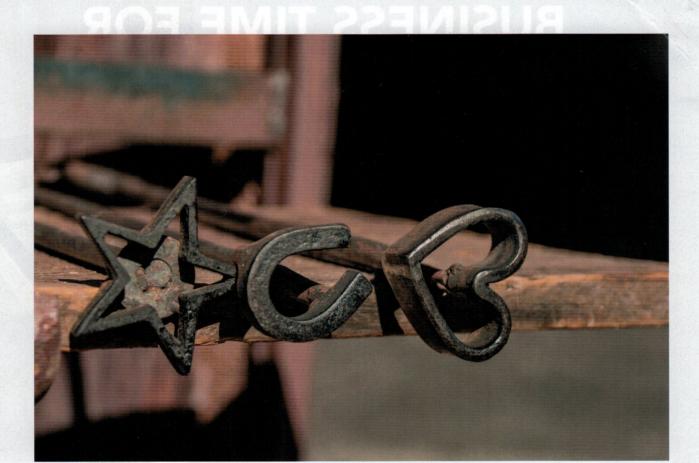
Producers of packaged goods used the same principle, so that consumers could tell where that particular cough drop or bottle of beer came from. Case in point: in the late 1880s, the shelves of the local drugstore were fair groaning with bottles of soda pop from various producers.

Before a customer could reach for a Coke, the Coca-Cola Company needed to make sure that customer could tell the difference between a Coke and all those other caramel-coloured fizzy drinks. And so a famous brand name was born.

The definition of a 'brand' therefore ended up being the name given to a product or service from a particular source.

All that changed towards the end of the 20th century. Savvy marketers realised that there was more to the brand of a product or service than just its name.

They clicked to the fact that they could create a specific

perception of their brand among consumers.

David Ogilvy (who, after working in espionage with Ian Fleming, set up the global advertising giant Ogilvy & Mather) called it "the intangible sum of a product's attributes".

In more basic terms, a brand became what the public thought of when they heard a particular 'brand name'.

This perception worked on both a factual and emotional basis. An example? "It's a grunty off-road four-wheel-drive and it's exciting!"

In summary then, your brand name is what people see on your business card, the side of your building, your box of crackers or your email signature.

Your brand, however, is what people think of, or perceive, when they see or hear your brand name.

PERCEPTION IS EVERYTHING

So, how do you go about creating that perception?

First up, get inside the head of your target markets. What is it they want and how does your product or service satisfy that need?

Let's use our friend Coca-Cola again as an example. They've built their brand around fun times and socialising. Everything they've done comes back to that one simple proposition. Their target markets want to relax and enjoy life. Coca-Cola is an integral part of that lifestyle – heck, they even took ownership of Christmas with their Santa design way back in 1931!

Now, start to think about your brand. What is its personality? How would someone describe your brand if it was a person? Is it fun? Responsible? Serious? Macho? Romantic? Do a brain-

dump and try to refine the list down to five or six key traits.

Consider your brand's inner driving properties as well – its Core Values. Examples here could be Honest, Innovative, Risk-Taker, or Passionate. Again, do a brain dump and refine your list. As a rule of thumb, the shorter the list, the more focused you are.

Now it's time to write your brand essence. This single sentence statement (preferably no more than 20 words) describes your brand's relationship with your customer.

Let's use Coke as an example again since we're on a roll. Their brand essence could read along the lines of: "For people who love to socialise with friends, Coke provides a refreshing drink day and night."

Right, you've got your brand essence sorted and all of the key stakeholders in your business are in agreement (that's really important by the way). This is where the fun really begins – you get to help bring that brand essence to life.

Bringing a brand essence to life will be the subject of part-two of this article, to be published in the September issue. **NZB**

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