

Of brands and people

People are like brands. Brands are like people. Please stop surfing now if you're thinking: I'm not interested in the subject of branding; I'm not Coca-Cola. The brand is the most undervalued force in any business. By looking at your own personal and professional position through the brand lens everything becomes clearer and more coherent. It lets you recognise your true potential. It creates differentiation. It strengthens strengths.

Brands are like people

Strong brands have a clearly recognisable character. Strong brands express an attitude. You associate strong brands with something that is worth striving for. Strong brands create differentiation.

Isn't it fascinating that people will pay up to 50 percent more for practically the same car if the name above the radiator grill says Audi instead of Skoda? Cadillac instead of Chevrolet? Isn't it shocking that red wine with a fashionable provenance can fetch five times the price of a red wine from a no-name area even though a blind tasting can't tell them apart? Isn't it funny, to the point of being tragic, that our children refuse to wear perfectly well made trousers just because they don't have the right label, so that we end up having to spend three times as much? Brands are popular in the same way that people are. I trust a brand because I have positive expectations of it. I am loyal to a brand because it gives me a sense of security and I don't have to fear the consequences of being disloyal.

People are like brands

What are your outstanding characteristics? If you can answer that straight away you are aware of your own market value. If you answer it by sighing and naming a couple of weaknesses, your brand has true potential. But first these weaknesses have to be put under a spotlight.

If we work in a company that belongs to us then it is only natural that we have a high degree of involvement in deciding on the brand that this company is seen as. The brand and the company reflect our own character. Readers who do not have a company of their own serve a brand. The key question is: does "my" brand image tally with my attitude and convictions? If so, then I am in the right place. If not, then there are two further questions to ask: am I strong and influential enough to manipulate "my" brand in such a way that it starts to fit me better? If this is not the case: am I willing and able to develop myself within the spirit of "my" brand?

Of course, I can choose to ignore all these thoughts but I then have to accept that this means allowing an essential element of my true potential to go to waste.

Brands set the tone

Let's forget about Coca-Cola, Microsoft and Harley Davidson for a moment. Let's think instead about the company we work for. How are we perceived? How am I perceived as the representative of this company? What do our clients and partners say about us? About me? Ask these questions and the answers show what tone you set. If you then complete this evaluation by assessing your market position and the margin that your performances achieve, then you are getting closer to the value that your brand represents. Ignore any discrepancies that arise. Draw your own conclusions and make the right decisions in order to maintain and develop this determined brand value.

"Thinking in brands" is not a religion. It is, however, an approach that expands and enhances professional thinking and dealing. It is worth thinking about brands in such a way that you then ask yourself where you are positioned and where you would like to be positioned. Both personally and professionally.