

Does Microsoft produce recording artists? No. Does Nike manufacture appliances? No. Does Roots make hip athletic wear or do they fly planes? (They tried to do both and the airline crashed. It was so “off brand,” the public didn’t buy it.)

When you’re clear, focused and deliver on your brand promises, you become a brand and market leader. Because different qualities appeal to different people, there is room at the top for a number of powerful brands. Look at the cleaning aisle in your local supermarket. You’ll see Tide, Sunlight, Whisk, etc., displayed side by side. As leading brands, they all have strong, loyal followings.

Mistake #3: Promising the world

Coaches tend to describe the benefits of coaching in vague and abstract terms. “You’ll self-actualize,” “Helping you live the life you’ll love,” “I’ll be the wind beneath your wings.” These claims often masquerade as benefit statements. They confuse prospective clients and often make them feel stupid for not getting what you’re saying. When you’re lucky, you’ll get inquiry calls that ask: “I read your brochure/visited your website/was referred to you by Bob Smith, but I’m not clear about what you really do — can you tell me?” More typically, the phone remains silent.

The more specific you are about what you deliver and the more accurately you map this onto the needs of your target audience, the more clearly you can express what your brand offers in terms of both rational and emotional benefits. Coach Michael Charest recommends you define a “thousand dollar problem” — because that’s the minimum a client is likely to pay for coaching — and then to offer a solution to that problem. (That’s the benefit to the coaching).

“Leading the pack are good coaches with good branding and marketing”

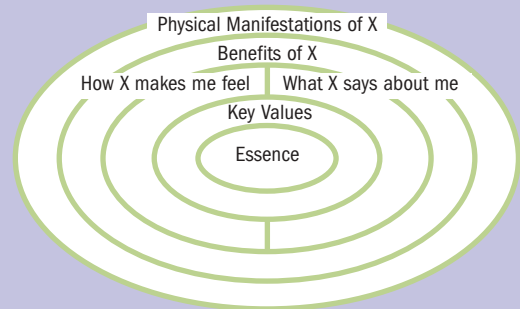
Five ways to improve your brand

So, to stand out in the coaching world, make serious “hay” of your brand. Next month, we’ll give you five sure-fire ways to take your brand from ho-hum to hurrah! Here’s a taste of what’s to come:

1. How to get clear on what you stand for and build a strong brand foundation
2. The secret to identifying what your customer thinks they want — so that you deliver what they truly need
3. How to develop a powerful benefit statement
4. How to discover what works and what doesn’t work in your marketing message
5. How to build your (client’s) brand experience ●

Michael Bungay Stanier is a certified coach and a brand consultant. Rosemary Davies-Janes is an in-demand speaker and the host of a weekly talk show “The Many Faces of Coaching” on Voice America.

Cutting into the Brand Onion



Physical Manifestations The tangible expressions of the brand: the logo, the marketing materials, products and service style, etc.

At Starbucks this includes: the mermaid logo; the names of the coffees; the barista’s uniforms; the jazz CDs for sale; the fancy names of the coffees; the ordering “jargon” and the store décor.

Benefits These are all the things you get from the brand. Coaches generally do benefits badly as they are unable to specifically identify what clients actually get from their coaching.

At Starbucks it’s the wide variety of choice, the reliably quality coffee, and the comfortable, upscale environment.

How it makes me feel/What it says about me The emotional benefits that are associated with the brand. Coaches generally completely ignore this ring!

At Starbucks it’s a feeling of accessible luxury, a small adventure, a moment of escape, a sense of belonging (to the club).

Key Values The two or three words that sum up the brand. Coaches commonly spend too much time here.

At Starbucks key words that express the brand are: Sophistication, Escape and Indulgence.

Brand Essence Is the word or phrase that expresses the ultimate fusion of customer needs and brand qualities. Coaches miss this altogether.

At Starbucks it is “Affordable Indulgence.”

Brand Resources

- Eating the Big Fish*, Adam Morgan (1999)
- The Experience Economy*, Joseph Pine & James Gilmore (1999)
- The New Brand World*, Scott Bedbury (2003)
- The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding*, Al and Laura Ries
- www.brandchannel.com (Interbrand)
- www.miboso.com (Rosemary Davies-Janes)
- www.APurpleCow.com (Seth Godin)
- www.boxofcrayons.biz (Michael Bungay Stanier)