

Branding.

Cohesive thinking

Seven points to consistent and coherent branding.

How to tell the world what you believe.



cohesion-ds.co.uk

**Your brand is not what you say
it is, it's what the world says it is.
All you can do is influence this.**

The goal of branding is not to do business with everyone who needs what you're selling.

The goal of branding is to do business with people who believe what you believe.

Branding is about getting your target market to see you as the only one that provides a solution to their problem. To succeed in branding, you must understand the needs and wants of your customers and prospects by integrating your brand strategies throughout your company at every point of public contact. In the past companies would communicate the features and benefits of their products to support the sales process. This begs the question "what has branding got to do with marketing?"

No longer do people purchase a product or service based solely on features and benefits; they are looking for products and services from a company that they can associate with, that reflects their own values and demonstrates an understanding of them.

How do you create a strong brand?

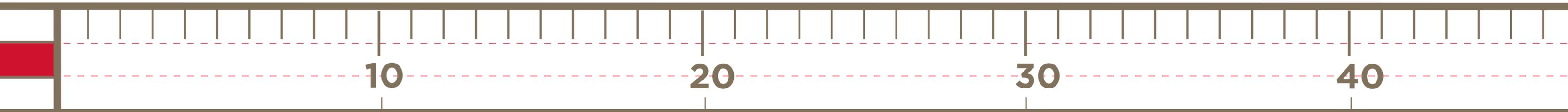
Creating a strong brand is about being completely coherent, with every aspect of what you do reinforcing everything else. This creates a consistent experience that triggers memories, improves understanding and reaffirms shared values.

The brand thermometer.

The brand thermometer consists of seven points successful brands consider and maintain to develop a strong brand.

Take the temperature of your brand by scoring out of ten each of the seven points, then total them up and plot on the brand thermometer using a highlighter pen. This will provide a benchmark of how hot your brand is, and remember to do this exercise every six months.

The brand thermometer.



1. Know your cause.

How well does your brand articulate its purpose and belief?

Generally it is quite easy to explain what you do and how you do it. That is what most people talk about in their marketing. But, what you must really know and communicate to your customers is why you do it. The “why” will differentiate you from your competitors and will earn you loyalty in a market where someone else nearly always does what you do and potentially in a not so different way.

Score: / 10

2. Know your brand.

How well is your brand defined and communicated internally and externally?

The goal in defining your brand is the creation of trust and loyalty with your customers. To begin building your brand ask yourself three simple questions: who are we? what do we do? why does it matter? Knowing what you want to be and how you want to be perceived is important. Once you know this, clearly document it and make sure it is part of your business on a daily basis. You will need to translate this into your vision, values, personality and positioning and engender into meaningful day-to-day practices that your team can understand and buy into.

Score: / 10

3. Be innovative.

How well does your organisation embrace innovation from both your staff and partners?

Having a robust brand strategy is important in developing a strong brand, but it's design not strategy that touches emotions. Innovation requires creativity; the greatest benefits accrue from innovative and demanding ideas that can involve higher risk and greater commitment. Hard core businessmen and women often distrust creative activities geared to wide-ranging thinking. That which is hard to understand and intangible at the outset is invariably categorised as risky. If you want to develop a strong brand then design and creativity need to be embedded into the heart of your organisation. Innovation lies at the centre of both better design and better business.

Score: / 10

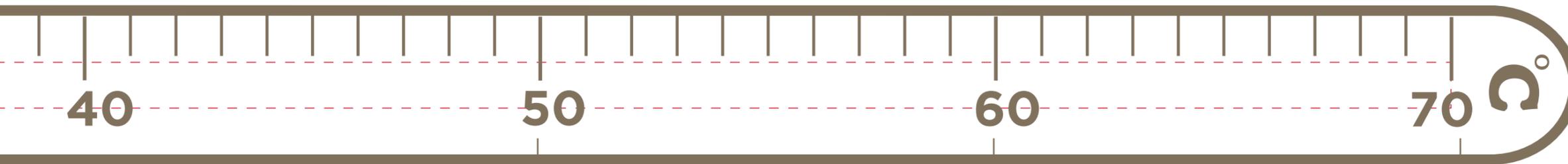
4. Be identified.

How well is your identity defined and does it accommodate your customer journeys?

Your visual identity is the clothes that dress your brand, it's the design of your communications and products. The most powerful design is often the most simple. Whatever the design solution for your brand, brands that have defined their values and use these as the measure for their identity will be on their way to being coherent in the minds of their audience. Your identity not only encompasses your logo but includes typography, colour, imagery, graphic style, tone of voice (spoken and written) and sound/music.

Score: / 10

The brand thermometer.



5. Live the brand.

How much is your brand integrated into HR? Do your people know and live your brand?

A great brand not only looks good, it will be consistently applied and it will endure because everyone in the organisation feels connected to it and takes care of it. Nowhere is this more true than in a customer service brand. Living the brand requires that the relationship between human resources and marketing is as close as the traditional relationship between sales and marketing. This can be achieved by jointly creating and working together on an employee journey that ensures the brand is consistently experienced and embedded within the organisation from recruitment advertising, to induction training, to appraisals.

Score: / 10

6. Be consistent.

How consistent and coherent has your brand been in communicating your message and values?

As human beings we all want to belong. We look for signs that will lead us to like-minded organisations that share our values. Great brands reflect an organisation's values, and recognition of these values generates trust. If, however, there is a lack of consistency in an organisation's brand, it will only serve to confuse and undermine your customers' trust and loyalty. Internally, a coherent brand is the foundation of a culture that supports innovation. Everyone is and should be creative. The aim is to focus creativity into areas of real need and opportunity. If there is consistency and coherence, and employees know what makes the brand tick, then they will know to ask themselves the question when making decisions big or small: "Will it help or hurt the brand."

Score: / 10

7. Stay focused.

How much does your brand know what it is, why it's different and why people want it?

Keeping your brand focused is important to its success. An unfocused brand is one that is so broad that it does not stand for anything. A focused brand, however, knows exactly what it is, why it's different and why people want it. This is not always easy to achieve as it runs counter to the goal of business; if we narrow the offerings we narrow the opportunity for profit. But this is not always the case, being number one in a small category can be better than being number three in a large category.

Score: / 10