

The new rules for intelligent brands

What's going to differentiate the great brands from the also ran's? The magnificent from the mediocre? In my book it is all about being intelligent. What's intelligence? Well an intelligent organism is one that constantly monitors, adjusts and reacts to its environment for its own self-interest. In brand terms this means being smart and understanding the new rules of branding in an always on, completely connected world where your every move is watched and talked about. Here are a handful of intelligent brand rules to help you on your way.

By Orestis Patricios, issued by Ornico 29 Jan 2013

1. **A good brand changes the world.** Guy Kawasaki, one time chief brand evangelist at Apple said that, and he's absolutely right. In a world where protestors are demonstrating outside of stock exchanges, mines and in city banks, brands need to give rather than take away from the world. And the good news is that doing good isn't just great for your brand, it is excellent for your business' bottom line. George Serafeim of Harvard Business School did research on 18 companies in the United States over the course of twenty years to see if good corporate citizenship affected the bottom line. This is what he said about the analysis: "We found that the high sustainability group out-performs the low sustainability group in terms of stock market performance. And also we found that the high sustainability group out-performs the low sustainability group in terms of operating performance as well. Whether you look at it in terms of assets or in terms of equity, you find stronger performance." By 'high sustainability' Serafeim means businesses that do good by being sustainable. The bottom line then is you can be a good brand that changes the world and still make good money.
2. **Slogans versus the truth.** Now this is an idea I got from Seth Godin, the best-selling author who has written fourteen books that have been translated into more than thirty languages. And, every single one of those books has been a best seller. Godin asks the question: "What if your slogan is true?" He says that underneath a slogan one can find a story, a shadow of what your business or brand is up to, but he begs the question: "Is that story true?" "Apple has had various slogans through the years, but in every successful iteration of the company, the story has been remarkably consistent: Apple's story is that they are idiosyncratic artisans producing beautiful products for smart people. That's a slogan, but it's a useful tool for deciding if you're making something or doing something that you ought to be focusing on." The telling point here is to focus on the truth. And by so doing, like Apple, to become the real story of a truly great brand.
3. **Reputation is everything.** And everything's online. It has been said a hundred times or more before, but we cannot say it enough. Social buzz in digital networks is a lot like word of mouth on steroids. In the good old days (before the social networks) if you had a complaint you'd tell your friends, neighbours and mouth off around the water colour at work. Back then, at best, you'd influence a handful or more of people. Today we live in an age where people have hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands and sometimes even hundreds of thousands of followers. A bad experience can become viral very quickly, particularly if that complaint has been created into a funny YouTube montage or is tweeted by a celebrity. Now, more than ever before, it is crucial to monitor your brand's reputation both in traditional and digital media. And to respond.
4. **The new currency is social currency.** People are starting to spend more and more time on digital networks, and as they do what they use to create their identity online is called 'social currency'. In human terms social currency can be hot news, gossip, hilarious photographs or crucial recommendations. Basically your influence and identity online is created by the social currency you deliver to your audience - your friends on Facebook and your followers on Twitter. The more relevant and valuable your social currency, the more it is passed on or endorsed, and the more popular and influential you become. In brand terms the same concept of social currency applies. Thus the big question is how to you improve your relevance and value to the people that follow you so that your social currency improves and you build trust, loyalty and influence.

For more insight on intelligent brands go to www.ornico.co.za; check out Ornico's Facebook page or follow Patricios

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oresti Patricios is the CEO of Ornico.

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