



Aspire! Help Your Customer Think Positively Through Emotional Branding

Does your product or service make people feel good about themselves? This has been a popular question since 2001 when ad guru, Marc Gobe, authored a book entitled 'Emotional Branding.' However, the question is especially important now as millions of Americans feel pessimistic about their futures due to the Covid-19 crisis and angry encounters about racial and social inequity.

As ridiculous as it sounds, many of your customers or prospects think that somehow, they contribute to these problems and deserve to be punished. Many suspect that they deserve the financial and health troubles that are redefining our lives right now. This happens at a subconscious level, of course, but if your product is life-affirming in some small way, it gives people a reason to pull away from those thoughts and think better of themselves.

To be happier.

To use emotional branding, you must trigger the right (positive) emotional states: physical safety, financial security, excitement, a sense of connection, social status or respect by others, even psychological principles like self-acceptance, self-expression or confidence.

Many organizations now understand the idea and try to surround their brand with sentimental imagery or emotional phrases. But Aristotle taught us that people are not moved to action by that kind of appeal, *alone*.

There must be a form of logic combined with emotion before the target audience buys. It's the two of them working together to grab attention, stimulate a first purchase and foster loyalty that leads to referrals.

Over 30 years ago, Taco Bell's ad agency conducted research groups with customers of Taco Bell. They asked question after question about feelings and associations. One young

office worker finally said, “I have a boring job and wish things could be different. At lunchtime, I come to Taco Bell. While sitting in the dining room eating a taco, I fantasize about skipping out of the office, catching a bus or train and spontaneously going to Mexico...”

The advertising researchers leaned forward, suspecting they had unearthed something special...

The office worker continued: “I would go to Tijuana without any particular plans and just bounce around until something interesting happened. There would be music as soon as I stepped out of the bus. There would be little parties everywhere. Everyone would like me. There would be no guilt or responsibility. It would be great.”

That’s how ‘Make a Run for the Border’ was born in the late eighties. Escapism drove enormous advertising success. But there is more to this example of emotional branding...

Around this time, the very first Value Menu in the history of fast food was also born – another Taco Bell coup. The marketing explosion occurred when the simple logic of purchasing a low-priced taco from the Value Menu was combined with the getaway passion of Run for the Border.

Emotion-plus-logic.

This is the formula that many companies, even those who sell to businesses, can embrace. Help buyers “possibilitize” rather than defend themselves from possible harm. Position your product as reflecting your customers’ highest aspirations. Link your service to an inspiring quote from a famous person. Find symbols of your product’s best qualities. Construct your sales presentation as if it were a valuable piece of abstract art. Be a catalyst, not just a vendor. Go beyond performance and functionality by answering this question: *“When we do everything just perfectly, how does my customer feel?”*

This article – written by Lynn Hinderaker, NEWbraska Partners - expands upon ideas explained by Shobha Ponnappa from the business2community website.