

Achieving Results

A Black Diamond Associates Publication

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Keeping Your Brand Promise

As a consumer, you appreciate the value of a great brand. I'm sure you can think of a business that has earned your loyalty because it consistently meets your expectations for selection, service, price, quality, innovation, or simply the total experience. Perhaps it is Ritz Carlton: "*Ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen.*" Or maybe you value FedEx: "*When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight.*"



As a business person, you know that great brands – ones that deliver on their promise consistently – aren't an accident. They are carefully developed and nurtured. The leaders of these "great brand" companies work to assure that everyone in their organization is aligned to produce a product or deliver a service that is consistent with the brand promise.

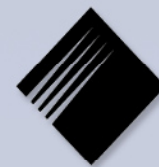
Creating alignment between your brand promise (what you want your customers to think or feel about your brand) and your brand identity (what your customers actually think about your brand) is a company-wide responsibility and it starts at the top.

More than a logo and a tagline

Your brand is a commitment to your customers of the value they

"Your premium brand had better be delivering something special, or it's not going to get the business."

~ Warren Buffett



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Is your company living up to its brand promise? Does every person in your organization know what your brand promise is and how their behaviors reflect the brand? Is everyone in your organization committed and are your processes designed to deliver on the brand promise? Do you measure your success?

If you responded "yes" to these four questions, chances are your customers consistently experience your brand promise. If not, you may have some opportunity to improve. Black Diamond Associates can help.

Through proven processes we can help you assess where you are, define where you need to be and make the necessary changes to close the gap. Give us a call.

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can expect. It tells the customer more than who you are; it expresses what they can expect from you. Commitments require much more than lip service; they require action. Each person at every point of connection must deliver on that commitment.

We recently visited a large warehouse store that sets the expectation you can find whatever you're looking for. But we didn't. When the clerk asked "Did you find everything you needed?" and we responded "No," we were told to look online or try another store. Compare that response to a clerk who could have said "Let me check online for you or call another store." This was a missed opportunity to live the brand. The result – we will shop their competitor first next time.

Your customers experience your brand at every point of contact. Delivering on the promise is a matter of performance excellence and creates customer loyalty.

Support systems in place

Your business processes must support your employees in delivering your brand promise. I recently called a company I have done business with for many years to request a rebate. Krista answered the call with the company's promise "Thank you for calling XYZ Company where customer service is our number one priority." This is the point where XYZ Company's process broke down.

Although Krista was able to verify I was eligible for the rebate, she was not authorized to process it. The request had to go to a committee that only met once a week. Krista had to send my information to them and if they agreed, they would (snail) mail me some paperwork. I needed to complete the paperwork, mail it back and if everything was in order, I could expect my rebate in 6 weeks.

XYZ Company not only failed to live up to their tagline – "customer service is our number one priority" – they wasted significant resources, diminished the value of an employee and lost a customer in the process. (I won't be doing business with XYZ Company anymore.) I'm sure that Krista was competent enough to process the rebate. If not, she should be trained. If she is not trainable, she should be replaced.

Your employees know where your processes are failing – ask them. Not only will you benefit from increased brand loyalty, you likely save a lot of money at the same time.

Measure your results

You need to constantly measure whether or not your

customers perceive they are receiving the value you promise. If you don't measure it, you can't manage it so spend time to determine what metrics are indicators of your success. Then, put processes in place to collect the data and review the results on a regular basis.

While the appropriate measures will vary by line of business, one metric that is a key indicator for most companies is repeat or referral business. If you meet or exceed your customer's expectations, they are likely to come back and/or refer a friend.

Whether you've spent thousands or millions on developing your company's brand identity, what is most important is living up to the promise the brand stands for. Only then will you earn a return on your investment.

Top 10 Ways to Be Accountable

Unfortunately, it's all too easy to weasel out of a commitment that we make only to ourselves. Sometimes all it takes is a promise to someone else to spur us to live up to our commitments. Here are the Top 10 ways to hold yourself accountable.

1. Ask a friend or loved one to support your efforts.
2. Have an accountability partner. Perhaps someone you see at trainings, or a work buddy.
3. Set SMART goals (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time-based). Then measure your results against them.
4. Reward yourself. Make it really fun or pleasurable to achieve what you commit to!
5. Work with a coach. A coach will remind you of your vision and commitments, and help explore your roadblocks to action.
6. Create or join a "nag" group or a "dream circle"—any group of people you report to regularly.
7. Keep accurate records and have others review them. For example, a bookkeeper could keep you accountable for producing monthly financials.
8. Put money on it. You'll get really serious!
9. Publicly declare. Now your public reputation is riding on your word.
10. Establish heinous consequences. Donate to an organization whose activities you abhor if you do NOT follow through on your commitment.

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