Brand Alignment: Why and How to Get Your Ducks in a Row
By Marsha Lindsay, president and CEO of Lindsay, Stone & Briggs

Brand alignment is a simple way of saying: Harness the power of your whole company to deliver your brand promise in employee behavior, new product development, and sales and marketing efforts. A brand promise is a statement of the relevance and differentiation that gives you competitive advantage. Here are Marsha Lindsay’s ten ways to align companies and their brands.

1. Define the role of your brand’s value proposition in achieving your vision.

2. Get buy-in from your key people by involving them right from the start in determining what your brand stands for and aligning people behind it.

3. Educate your entire team on what it means to brand, the value of the brand to them, how and why branding works, what your brand stands for and how you know what your brand stands for. Teach your team to speak the language and meaning of the brand. Give them common information, terms and expectations.

4. Don’t just have a brand promise for end users. Instead, develop its complement for employees so they not only know what they need to deliver on, but how the brand positioning is relevant to their work and how it gives meaning to their work.

5. Integrate marketing and human resources: Brand alignment is a behavioral approach to brand management. HR must be linked with marketing to create a culture and performance measures/incentives to deliver on your brand promise.

6. Measure how your employee behaviors are perceived by customers to deliver on the brand’s promise, how customers perceive external communications to represent the brand’s relevance and differentiation and how employees rate the accuracy of the
external communications. Base your business plan on closing the gaps between current practice and perceptions and where you want to be.

7. Equip your employees with the understanding and tools to close the gaps. Tools include training, an intranet, style or portfolio guidelines and performance review forms.

8. Keep the brand’s promise, its relevance to employees, appropriate behaviors and more in front of employees year round. Realize that your internal communications rollout and plan is just as important as your external one.

9. Create branded experiences for employees as well as customers and consumers.

Experiences embed the brand’s relevance and differentiation into hearts and memories.

10. Operationalize the brand. Have your relevance and differentiation drive your strategic business planning and the three primary responsibilities of management: 1. the setting of goals that address your relevance and differentiation, 2. allocating resources to those products, services and initiatives that deliver that relevance and differentiation, and 3. managing and incenting people to live the brand promise.

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