

inside-out

LINKING INSIGHTS TO ACTIONS:
What we can learn from the Apple Brand Snap to help get on-brand. And a brand new team activity you can use inside your organization. **2**

HARD AND FAST:
Making brand loyalty work for customers is one thing, but how much attention are you paying to becoming an on-brand employer? It's hand and glove. **3**

WHO SAID WHAT?:
Feedback from those in the know; marketing, HR, and customer service experts pushing customer service and brand strategies. **4**

KNOW HOW – CAN DO: If you like the book, you'll love the new Branded Customer Service products that will provide you with the pathway to engage staff through a unique process that builds consumer trust, and gives you a real edge in business. **4**

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I love you, but I don't always like you!

If you know Janelle Barlow, you'll know she is passionate about her Apples. But as the elephant once said to his mistress the mouse, our love life is not always easy! Here Janelle walks us through a moment when her relationship with Apple almost went pear-shaped, survived, and prospered.

on-brand

I am an avid Apple Computer fan. Maybe I'm a bit of a maverick at heart, but really I'm drawn to the look, the feel, and the taste of Apple. My affection has grown closer over a long time and at every opportunity I'm cheering them on. In a nutshell, I'm in love.

This love was sorely tested in the past couple of months, even while Apple struggled to provide solutions to my elegant and sleek, but faulty 17" Power Book G4.

For months I suffered from an intermittent problem in which the computer would not display *anything* on the screen. Eventually, seemingly with a mind of its own testing my love and affection, it would fix itself—sometimes right before a presentation. I returned the computer but the Apple Care doctors could never replicate the problem under their observation.

Finally, my worst fear came true. At the launch of Branded Customer Service in Cyprus, the Apple of my eye simply said no way *Jose*, you're flying solo today! And so it continued right across Europe and Ireland.

When little Apple and I got home to the US, I sent her off for surgical help, only to have the same problem recur on our first new engagement. In desperation I called Apple Care again. By this time my case notes were so long I was regularly transferred to a senior surgeon. Again, it was suggested that I send little Apple in for more tests and rehabilitation.

Undoubtedly, this was a Zaltman experience! Harvard Professor Gerald Zaltman estimates that as much as 95% of the feelings and judgments that enable us to quickly assess a brand are below conscious awareness. In other words, when we feel attached to a brand, we don't know exactly why. It's "just there." These complicated and strong feelings help to define who we are, and are felt in every part of the body.

It's this emotional complexity, especially when people are deeply engaged with a particular brand, that makes identifying appropriate on-brand behaviors so difficult for organizations. This is certainly true when there has been a service failure.

If you have ever watched your children behave in the most outrageous fashion and seriously considered abandoning them, and, at the same time, felt completely in love with that treasure of your life, you'll have a sense of the feelings I went through. I not only felt completely betrayed, I also didn't comprehend how a

computer could have such an impact on my emotional state. I was embroiled with a mix of feelings that ranged from complete disgust with Apple's makers to a tremendous fear that perhaps I just couldn't continue to use the only brand of computers I have ever used.

I got very quiet, and told the technician that I felt utterly betrayed, and that I simply had no idea what to do. I talked about the experience of getting deeply attached to a brand and then to have the organization fail me after more than 20 years of intense loyalty.

Then the technician was quiet for a moment. He excused himself, and said, "Let me see what I can do." He soon came back and told me that they were going to give me a brand new little Apple!

His tone was just so, so, so right. He said, "I don't expect this to be a perfect solution because you won't have a computer in hand for a few days. But this situation can't continue." And indeed it couldn't, or Apple was in danger of losing me and my entire office to its competitors.

I can't say that Apple Computer educates its staff in how to handle the emotional side of computer problems. They certainly teach their staff to trouble shoot, and in most cases they find solutions, even if it takes them hours to go through their procedures.

But this particular Apple Computer champion understood that it wasn't just my little Apple that needed repairing at that moment. It was definitely on-brand. It would be an understatement to say that the role computers play in our lives, qualify as complex. Pure mechanical solutions are inadequate in these situations. Something positive and emotional needs to be offered when betrayal is felt. Whatever cost Apple incurred to replace my year-old PowerBook is tiny in comparison to buying my ongoing loyalty. And whatever they are doing on the inside to inspire that technician to fully understand my situation is as much a part of Apple technical solutions as anything else they do.

Now, because of the way they got through this, Apple and I are stronger than ever. Much like the nature of our personal relationships!



LINKING INSIGHTS TO ACTIONS

skills

HARD AND FAST
LINKING INSIGHTS TO ACTIONS

What we can learn from the Apple Brand Snap

- 1 **Branding is about trust, and its reward is loyalty if that trust is strong.** Is every customer-touching staff member in your organization encouraged to look at the historical relationship a customer has had with the organization, when solving customer problems? Or do staff merely attempt to provide solutions? How can you determine the answer to this question?
- 2 **Service failures offer learning opportunities to identify appropriate brand behavior.** What are you learning from the type of situation that Janelle had with Apple?
- 3 **Serious service failures may suggest changes in procedure so companies don't lose their brand-loyal customers.** When situations arise that require the customer to return on multiple occasions, is it possible for the organization to assign a particular person the responsibility of shepherding the case through to completion? Janelle guesses she spent several hours waiting, while one technician or another had to read through her entire case notes. And, as her case grew larger and larger, it took more and more time before she could even begin to talk with the technician, who would just as likely refer her to a more senior technician, who also had to read through the case notes yet again.
- ? **Is anything comparable to this going on in your organization?** Who would know about it? At a minimum, it's customer unfriendly. But if your brand speaks to "making people smile," as Apple promises to with its stylish products, then to stay on-brand they also need to educate their staff on how to put a smile on the customer's face.

What if money were no object?

There's so much more we could do to be on-brand, yet we might go bankrupt in the process! In any organization, we must weigh up the costs versus the benefits of enhancements to the products and services we provide. Nonetheless, it can be a useful exercise to expand our horizons by imagining "heaven" and designing on-brand experiences without regard to cost.

HERE'S HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR CREATIVITY IN THIS FLIGHT OF FANCY.

1. **Identify something that your customers currently purchase.** Choose a product or service that requires some type of after-sales interaction, and describe in detail everything you currently do for your customers.

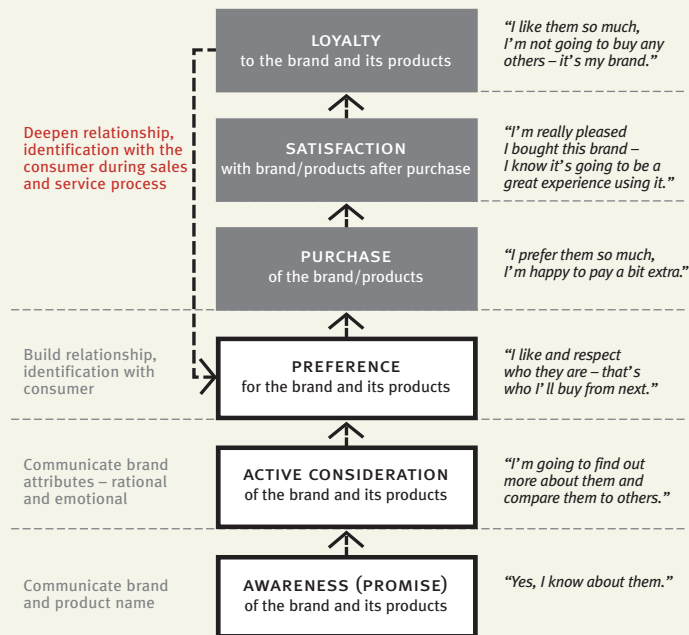
this a true on-brand experience for them? What are implications for product quality, design, and the role of customer service staff? Answer as many of these types of questions as possible.
2. **List what you think your customers expect from you when they make this purchase.** (You might actually call a few customers and ask them what they think they should get. Incidentally, what they think they should get is the brand promise *they* think you are making to them.)
3. **Now explore what type of additional brand value can be created for your customers.** What if you wanted to dazzle your customers to the degree that you would have no competitors in your brand space? Brainstorm all the things that you could do.
4. **What would the customer experience be if you could do everything implied in your brand offering?** What things would you have to do differently from now, to make

Whatever the outcome, this exercise will help you to develop a deeper understanding of your brand experience relative to your customers' expectations. And we often uncover new ways to deliver more value to the customer, especially through small changes in personal service, for very little extra time and cost.

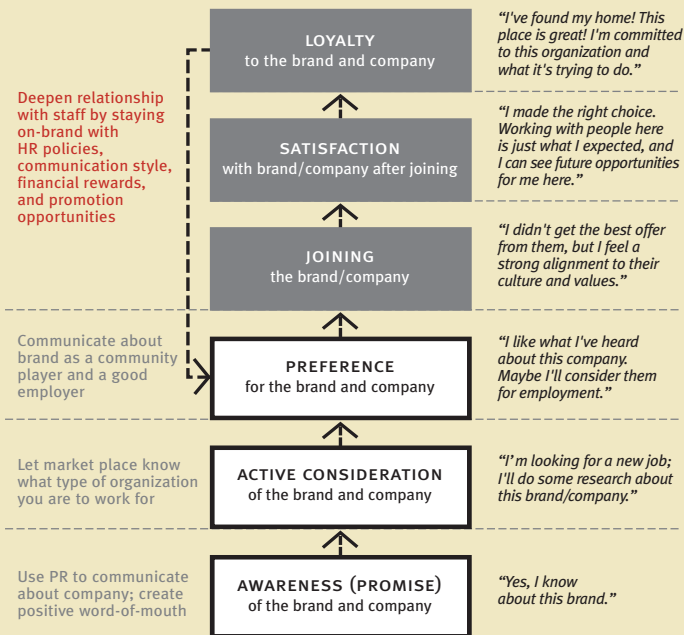
If you would like more Toolbox exercises to help you become an on-brand organization, join the online Resource Centre of brand champions.
www.brandedservice.com
5. **Now, is it feasible to add some of these additional features to your current brand offering?** If so, can other costs be reduced? Or, perhaps you could charge more for this new premium product or service. Or perhaps you can periodically offer these extras to special customers or to customers you are in danger of losing.

Employee and Customer Brand Loyalty—Hand and Glove

A LOT HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT CUSTOMER LOYALTY. THE MODEL THAT WE USE AT BRANDED CUSTOMER SERVICE LOOKS LIKE THIS:



WHAT IF WE TOOK THE SAME MODEL AND CONSIDERED IT FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE EMPLOYEE? IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE THE FOLLOWING:



Whether you've thought about it or not, your company already has an employment brand, because people already have a perception about you as an employer. The question is whether you are actively managing that perception to attract the people who will fit naturally with your brand, or do you allow your employment brand to develop by default.

The principles for customer and employee brand management are very similar. An advertising campaign can help build awareness, and communicate a point of difference in the marketplace. But the people you recruit will only become loyal employees if their experiences inside the company match or exceed the expectations you've created with them. In-house events like a celebration of product launches (such as an entertainment evening with Elton John that biotech company Genetech threw, after successfully launching

three new drugs) can create a significant buzz with staff and, in the wider community, about what it means to work at such a place.

But the entire fabric of your workplace (communication, management behaviors, policies, and processes...) also needs to reflect your brand uniqueness and personality. Jan Mottram, GM HR for leading on-brand company Vodafone New Zealand, says her litmus test is when new employees say something like "this place is just what I thought it would be."

It's not easy to develop a strong, distinctive brand. And it's not easy to become known as a great employer. To make Fortune Magazine's list of the "100 Best Companies to Work For," for example, is a daunting task. This past year approximately a thousand qualifying companies started the application process – only 350 completed it. The process includes a 57 question survey of at least

350 randomly selected employees. This accounts for 2/3rds of the total rating, with the balance coming from an assessment of credibility, respect, fairness, and pride.

It's a rigorous process, but major US organizations not only want to be on that list, they want to be near the top. Fortune frequently runs articles on some of these companies throughout the year, providing tremendous P.R. advantages, both for the consumer and employee brand.

A summary of each of the top 100 companies (see January issue of Fortune Magazine) reads like a brand promise for employees, in much the same way a "Who we are, what we offer" statement reads for customers.

We know how valuable customer loyalty is, and many companies put a lot of effort into developing their consumer brands. However, more and more are now making similar efforts with their employment brands.

That's not surprising—it's hand and glove. Delivering on-brand service is much easier if you can attract, retain, and encourage loyal employees who are naturally aligned to your brand. And besides, as the shortage of skilled and motivated workers increases, competition for employees is only going to become more intense. Great employment branding will be another competitive edge.

who said what

Branding is associated with advertising, but it's less about ads and more about touch points. Brand contact points are crucial.

—Clarke Caywood, Assoc. Prof. of Integrated Marketing, Northwestern University.

Clarke Caywood, named by PR Week as one of the most influential 100 PR people in the 20th Century, argues that the “employee comes first.” He rebukes companies that don't do internal branding with their employees. Internal branding empowers employees, and gives them “permission”, to play their role in the brand. The employee's first priority is to represent the brand with the customer.

For more ideas about the role that PR plays in branding, have a look at: <http://mediainsider.prnewswire.com/blog>

NEW YORK TIMES – BOOK REVIEW 5TH DECEMBER 2004 (excerpt) ...the natural inclination of executives everywhere will be to increase their marketing budgets to attract new clients. [This] can be an expensive mistake... they should first make sure that they are doing everything they can to keep the ones they already have, then try to get a larger revenue stream from them. Brand equity, [Barlow and Stewart] contend, increases when everything associated with a product or service—the advertising, the packaging, and especially the customer service—works together. As a result, the more that a brand exceeds its promises, the greater the brand equity.

READER FEEDBACK: [abridged] ‘After I read the first couple of chapters I thought, “everything I am reading is true but ... isn't that obvious?” Then I realized that most people really do NOT know—not in the sense of knowing how to do it, and how to create structures that support doing it.

We did not have a template for understanding how to create and sustain branded service, how to train people to do it again and again. So I bet a lot of readers will say, “well, duh!” ...and then, “wait a minute ...but we have not been DOing that,” which means if we knew it at all, we knew it only as an abstract concept and not a workable plan.’ —Richard Thieme

More views can be found on www.amazon.com

know how CAN DO

Interested in doing more with Branded Customer Service yourself?

Following the positively exciting response to the release of the book, it's become even more evident to us that consultants and companies alike have a real desire to build their own capability in integrating their culture, service, and brands. In recent months we've been working very hard to meet this need. As a result, Branded Customer Service is no longer just a book!

In May 2005, we are launching a new range of products to help you to become an even better brand enabler yourself:

JOIN THE ONLINE RESOURCE CENTRE:

You'll become part of our vibrant online community, share ideas and challenges, and be able to access an ever expanding database of essential exercises, examples, and case studies. All for less than US\$10 per month.

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PURCHASE THE COMPLETE DO-IT-YOURSELF TOOL-KIT:

Virtually all our consulting IP, knowledge, and experience, jammed into a comprehensive package of tools, processes, and management resources. Pretty much all you will need to build completely customised and effective solutions, and integrate your business, brand, and customer service. Also includes Resource Centre membership for 12 months.

Tool-Kit will be ready to ship in May 2005.



BECOME A CERTIFIED CONSULTANT OF BRANDED CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Are you an external consultant or an internal company specialist in the fields of branding, customer service, or HR? Either way, completing our certification process will hugely expand your capability. The accelerated learning process is built around our 5.5 day On-Brand Simulator Camp. You'll work with other specialists, getting to grips with the tools and resources, and apply them in a dynamic, local company. Certification also includes the Tool-Kit, follow-up support, and advanced access to the Resource Centre.



Inaugural On-Brand Simulator Camp will be 23-28th May 2005, in Las Vegas, Nevada —just a few places left.

You can get much more information about these new offerings by downloading the PDF from our homepage www.brandedservice.com

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