

INTERBRAND INSIGHTS

Aligning Your Organization and Your Brand for Performance



As business and consumer markets become more competitive, and customers become more demanding, companies must work harder to secure the fundamental relationships that fuel their business growth. Building distinctive relationships with customers is what branding is about, whatever the market, whoever the client.

What makes the difference between an average corporate brand and a great one? Employees who actively and enthusiastically engage in delivering the unique brand promise day in and day out. An average brand becomes a great brand by living its values; that is the key ingredient for world-class performance.

Aligning your organization, operations and culture around your brand values brings the promise to life. A corporate brand stands for the relationship that an organization has with its employees, as much as it represents the relationship that it has with its customers through its product and service offering. For a brand to come to life with customers, the organization must be internally aligned to deliver the brand promise through the organization's culture, reward systems, key success activities and structure. In other words, employees must 'live' the brand values in their day to day interactions. And, management must demonstrate their commitment to these values through behavior as well as corporate communications, demonstrating sincerity—not just rhetoric.

A corporate brand stands for the relationship that an organization has with its employees, as much as it represents the relationship that it has with its customers through its product and service offering. For a brand to come to life with customers, the organization must be internally aligned to deliver the brand promise through the organization's culture, reward systems, key success activities and structure. In other words, employees must 'live' the brand values in their day to day interactions. And, management must demonstrate their commitment to these values through behavior as well as corporate communications, demonstrating sincerity—not just rhetoric.

These benchmark companies signal their commitment to their declared brand values in various ways.

- They effectively use internal communications to raise employee morale and commitment through the shared beliefs and vision.
- They give managers and staff a deeper understanding of the brand promise and the behaviors and values the promise demands – and train them to adapt their behavior.
- They enable all employees to understand how their own work processes and responsibilities contribute to delivering the brand promise to customers.
- They change company policies, e.g., recruitment, training, rewards, so that the organization is also behaving in line with its brand promise. The cover diagram shows how the alignment process works to deliver strong brand performance. When employees understand and accept that the values are genuine, they align their attitudes and behavior to the brand values. The result is greater satisfaction for both customers and employees, leading to employee and customer preference and loyalty.



Case Study: Aramark

Consider the situation faced by Chairman and CEO Joe Neubauer at Aramark in the early 1990s. After leading his business through a management LBO, he was faced with the daunting task of reinventing and reinvigorating an organization, then known as ARA. The imminent integration of three distinct businesses – uniform services, children's education and food services – posed a management challenge: how was ARA to leverage the strengths of the businesses and find common ground on which to bring these three parts into a whole? The answer lies in this service company's best and most powerful asset – its employees.

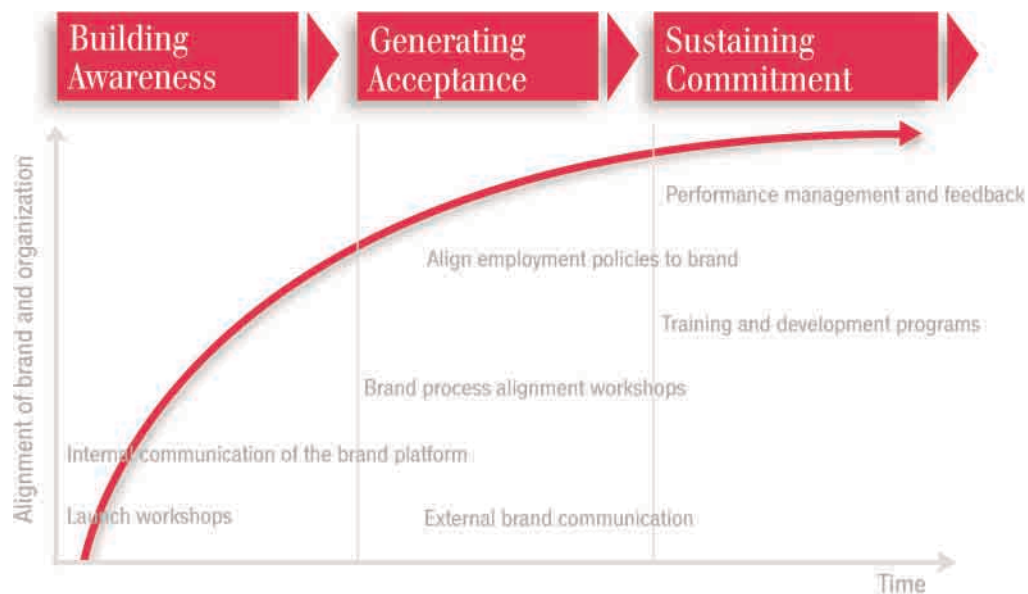
Aligning Your Organization and Your Brand for Performance

Neubauer's leadership led to the development of a new brand vision, celebrating the role and power of front line people in delivering the promise of "managed services, managed better." He integrated the distinct parts into one whole under a new brand Aramark.

The Aramark brand promise, managed services, managed better, is seen in the company's business beliefs: treating customers as long-term partners, looking at every business partnership as having a unique need, and measuring success through the value they create for customers. It is also celebrated in the company's culture as expressed in its logo, which represents its employees – the stars of the company.

This brand promise, aligned with the business strategy, fuels real growth for Aramark. It has delivered sterling results. Top line growth doubled. Sales from existing clients grew by 50%. EBIT grew by 75%. Joe Neubauer believes in the power of aligning the brand when he says: "Our people are aligned with our vision. They deliver our value in each and every way."

To maximize the success of any corporate branding effort, you must develop an integrated program of internal initiatives that actively support the brand. These actions will move your employees from awareness of the brand vision, to acceptance of the values and behaviors in support of the vision, to a sustained effort in bringing your brand to life.



Aligning Your Organization and Your Brand for Performance

Based on our work with a wide range of companies, we have identified four critical success factors that will help you to achieve the alignment of your organization to your brand promise.

1 Senior Management Stewardship

Visible leadership will drive consistent behavior. Top managers must demonstrate that internal brand alignment is a high priority for the entire company through their own commitment to brand goals, values and behaviors. Through words, matching actions and the initiatives they support, senior managers can demonstrate that the whole company is serious about keeping its brand promise.

2 Aligning Business and Brand Strategy

Customer relationships fuel success. Brand strategy must foster loyalty-based relationships by defining a relevant, differentiated and credible value proposition. Such success is achieved by ensuring the product and service quality is consistent with your brand promise. Select acquisition candidates that share similar values and attitudes to customers. Make new employees aware of the brand promise and values as soon as they join. Support customer expectations through every interaction and purchase. Failure to live up to the brand promise will quickly depreciate brand equity and ultimately, your bottom line.

3 Responsibility and Accountability

Middle managers are key to delivering the brand promise. Their role is to infuse their teams and their operations with a practical commitment to living the brand. This protocol applies as much to 'back office' functions as to sales and customer service. In this way, the brand becomes the platform for focusing staff attention outwards, towards the customer priorities that will secure future earnings. It often involves changes to processes, incentives, training and management style as much as communication.

4 Ongoing Performance Measurement and Feedback

What gets measured gets done. A coherent brand evaluation program with milestones, progress measures and celebrations of success is vital for sustaining the momentum of internal brand alignment. Regular customer feedback to monitor the effectiveness of your brand delivery serves two distinct and equally important purposes. It determines how successfully internal managers are translating business strategies into compelling value propositions. It also creates an employee feedback loop to assess customer acceptance of and satisfaction with the brand promise.

Founded in 1974, Interbrand serves the world with 34 offices in 22 countries. Working in close partnership with our clients we combine the rigorous strategy and analysis of brand consulting with world-class design and creativity.

We offer a range of services including research, strategy, naming and verbal identity, corporate identity, package design, retail design, internal brand communications, corporate reporting, digital branding tools, integrated marketing services, and brand valuation.

We enable our clients to achieve greater success by helping them to create and manage brand value.