

How to Make Your Business Brand Recession-Resistant

*Learn how conscious branding practices can capture and sustain
valuable market share in any economic situation*

By Suzanne Tulien, Co-founder of the Brand Ascension Group

How many of you are conscious of the state of our current economy? How many of you have started tightening the purse strings to prepare for rising prices, slow sales, and a tough ride ahead?

Business owners are already searching for ways to reduce the impact of the impending “R” word (RECESSION, there, I said it!). But there are many companies who have done the “due diligence” within their brand building strategies to ensure and support withstanding almost any kind of economic condition (barring national disasters!).

But before you start feeling like you need to invest in a family-sized bottle of Tums® finish reading this article and look for ways you can take on board the ideas.

Consider the following scenario with one of our clients – a premiere tanning salon who embarked on a branding initiative about 2.5 years ago. They were a dual store location of about 12 employees, and feeling the crunch of high gas prices, finding it to harder to retain young employees (“Y” generation), and implementing marketing campaigns with minimal return on their investments. Finally a big whammy, they were plagued with a profound “commodity mindset” from their targeted audience.

Enter: The Brand Ascension Group. Hearing their dilemma we immediately quiz them on their current brand. With questions like: (among others)

1. Do you and your employees truly understand what your brand stands for?
2. Do you have a set of core values for the brand that everyone in your company is aware of and understands?
3. Do you have a unique culture that fosters positive, memorable behaviors that differentiate you from your competitors?
4. Do you regularly ask your customers for feedback on your standards of performance?
5. Do your employees have the authority to “break the rules” to make a situation “right” for the customer?
6. Do you benchmark your employees’ behaviors against leading practices of highly successful brands?
7. Do you have a specific and unique ‘brand vocabulary’ that creates distinction with your brand?

8. Do you have a Brand Promise that your employees commit to and continually deliver on?
9. Do you understand and leverage all your key differentiators to your competitive advantage?

.....among other questions.

After lots of ‘deer in headlights’ and ‘no’ responses throughout this revealing interrogation (we had fun with it, really!), we recommended the immediate huddle of their core team into a highly intensive, interactive invention process to define, create, and build their Brand’s DNA from scratch. They were game, and after two full days of ideation, collaboration and precise selection, the team emerged from the process proud parents of a brand new brand! They built it, now they own it!

To make a long story shorter, we continued to consult with them throughout the year and guide them on how they would go about ‘operationalizing’ the new brand DNA into every facet of their operation so they could begin living and embodying it (across a ‘brand scorecard’; employees, customers, financial, and through their systems and processes).

From the Brand DNA process their team flushed out a very compelling and distinctive ‘Brand Platform’: SIMPLY MIND-BLOWING EXPERIENCE, which became the essence of their brand’s ‘way of being’ from that point on.

I remember this phone call from one of the owners: *“Hey, Suzanne, I had to call you and let you know what I’ve noticed since we developed our Brand Platform from the DNA session. The first thing we did was make a critical decision to let go of two of our employees who just weren’t willing to ‘step up’ the brand’s experience and what a relief to all the other employees who are taking on the new brand like wildfire! And, I noticed something yesterday that was so interesting! As I was walking through our retail portion of the store I overheard one of our employees challenging another to create a ‘mind-blowing experience’ for the next customer who walks in the door! They are really having a blast inventing ways to impress and take care of our customers, it’s incredible to watch!”*

Fast forward 1 ½ years. Just a few weeks ago we connected with this client once again to check in on how the brand development was going. And as if the flood gates had opened, she burst out with a list of things they have been implementing with their employees, their processes, and customers. All of which have positively impacted their bottom line! And each of these changes was highly relevant to the attributes of their Brand DNA (core values, style, differentiators and standards).

The industry overall has been in a virtual “slump” the last few years and with the “recession” mindset eroding any hope of new client enrollment into their services.

However; our client ***has reportedly increased their per customer transaction 35%-50%, adding much needed cash flow to their bottom line.*** How'd they do it?

They achieved this increase by being much more conscious of their behaviors, how they interact and communicate with each other, as a team culture, and with their customers. All this redesign was possible because of the work they did to define, create, and build their brand's core DNA...from the **inside** out.

Here's my point. When an entrepreneur makes the decision to build their brand, it has to mean more than developing a logo, business cards or develop a marketing campaign. The process of branding has to start INTERNALLY with your core purpose in mind of how you want your employees and customers to perceive you. ***If you don't actively define and manage that perception, your customers will!***

And when you take the time to develop your authentic brand, put a 'stake in the ground' and COMMIT to behaving consistently that way, then you will build trusting relationships with your team and your customers. So when your customers need/want your product or service, and when they have a choice of who to do business with....the choice will be obvious for them...YOU of course! Gain and retain market share now by building your brand's DNA!

(For more information on how you and your team can experience improved business performance just like our tanning salon client go to: www.BrandDNAProducts.com. We're now offering this same brand-building methodology in a highly interactive and accelerated on-line course environment utilizing the latest web-based technology You too can experience phenomenal results through our progressive methodology.

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