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### WHAT IS BRANDING AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

I once had a mid-sized regional bank client, whose very successful, wealthy and eccentric founder would not allow anyone to mention the words "brand" or "branding" when talking to him about his bank's advertising and marketing. He had a staunch rule - "My bank does not do brand advertising. It's a waste of money!"

***The man was very wealthy and successful, but he was also very wrong. Everything the bank did, from its print and broadcast advertising to the way customers were treated was "brand advertising."***

So what is "branding" and why should I care? I would not normally start a definition by explaining what something isn't, but due to a great deal of confusion, even among advertising professionals, I think it's necessary here.

Branding is not just a logo or stationery, it's not just a slogan and its not just TV spots that looks similar and don't focus on product or service (like the Nike spots). Branding is all of that...and a whole lot more.

Branding is the unique configuration of words, images, ideas, and experiences that forms a consumer's total perception of a company, product, or service - and gives it relevance to them. Every phone call, email, personal interaction, and ad is branding. Your fundamental marketing question is NOT, "do I or don't I brand?" Your fundamental question is, "how haphazard or controlled do I want my brand to be?" If you want to be more successful, you manage the way these interactions are created and delivered.

If you want a fair amount of control over how your brand is perceived, then one of the most important things you can do is establish a brand positioning and personality. Combined, they are your fundamental brand identity...your Yin and Yang. Some call it your Brand DNA. Others call it your Brand Platform. Whatever you call it, use it as the starting point for all decisions about the people, places and things you manage that help form consumer opinions (good, neutral or bad) about your brand.

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