



*A few tips on...*

# **DELIVERING YOUR BRAND PROMISE**

## DELIVERING YOUR BRAND PROMISE

### What is a brand promise?

A high-level brand promise (sometimes called brand essence) is an articulation of what target customers can expect from their experience with an organisation. It describes the experience and the value that this represents to the customer. We've shown a few examples on the right.

But is that all an organisation needs to do? Is creating a catchy promise that has appeal for target customers enough?

Not quite. Now comes the hard part.

The brand promise represents the decisions made by managers about the value the company will deliver to its target customers in order to earn their loyalty. As with other statements of direction, management must create the brand promise, own the brand promise, and relentlessly drive it to completion.

The brand promise drives all of the company's actions and investments in people, processes, products, technology and delivery channels. It creates a laser beam focus that provides clarity and cohesion to the firm's many and disparate activities. For that reason, its main audience is internal, unlike the bland tag-lines loved by copywriters that are designed solely for the external audience.



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## It must be of value to target customers

It must be grounded in what your target customers value most and care about. Virgin's promise, for example, is based on five key factors: value for money, quality, reliability, innovation and an indefinable, but nonetheless palpable, sense of fun. (Another slightly snappier version of the Virgin brand values is: genuine and fun, contemporary and different, consumers' champion).

## It must be the focus for the organisation

It serves as the promise made to customers, and therefore becomes a powerful anchor for employees and the internal values that are required to deliver it. In short, it replaces or aligns the numerous and disconnected missions, visions, values, brand values, and customer charters that we see in so many organisations. These are often contradictory, confusing and of little practical value in running the business.

## It must be different from competitors' promises

Brands that stand out do so because they stand for something. And they stand for something different. It's this sense of purpose that drives them. Yet so often you find brand promises that are insipid, sloganistic or merely some saccharine phrase that any of your competitors could easily claim. Be bold. Be brave. Make it different.

## It must be simple

Most contain too many words and separate ideas. It has been estimated that the average number of brand values for a company is five, and the average number remembered by employees is one and a half. It is better to find a single powerful concept that can be exemplified through articulating what it means in different contexts than five unmemorable ones.

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# DELIVERING YOUR BRAND PROMISE

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## What makes a brand promise work?



Our brand promise is: 'Helping customers connect with people and things that matter to them in a simpler, easier and better way'. Having this at the heart of our business and not limiting our brand philosophy to 'communications' gives us a real sense of purpose.

Tim Sefton,  
Customer Director, O2

When O2, the UK's leading mobile phone operator, entered the market, they knew they weren't the best voice or text provider; they were an average player in an increasingly commoditised industry. CEO, Ronan Dunne, posed the question. ***"If we were going to differentiate ourselves from the crowd and actually stand for something, what was it going to be?"***

O2 decided it was going to be the experience rather than the technology. They defined their brand promise, ***'Helping customers to connect'***, and committed to delivering this through an experience that would be ***'Bold, Open, Trusted and Clear'***. So in a market governed by terms and conditions designed to lock customers in, O2 tore up the rule book. They took away the scams; the small print that customers thought unfair; they made the tariffing more transparent and simpler; and they made it easy for customers to leave. ***"All the weasel is gone"***, said Dunne; ***"what you see is what you get."***

The result? One of the highest levels of advocacy in its market.

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## DELIVERING YOUR BRAND PROMISE

### What makes a brand promise work?

#### It must be actionable

It must be able to influence behaviour and create energy well beyond the marketing team. It is easier for people outside the immediate brand circle to get it if they can understand and apply for themselves the central ideas. It should be possible to sit down with the technical product development team and work through the practical implications of the promise in terms of future new product priorities and product design. Often the most valuable aspects of the promise are the detailed commitments that underpin each element:

*"We promise...which means we do...."*

The clearer the content, the more likely it is to lead to consistent delivery of the brand through behaviour and communications. The important thing is to drill down the promise into actionable items, as shown in the simplified example of the hospitality brand below.

#### Hotel X

##### Our promise

To make guests feel at home

##### Promise dimensions

Local touch | Individuality | Comforts of home

### Promise deliverables for local touch

#### Purpose

We use our local knowledge to help our guests quickly settle into the city and understand the local culture

#### What we do

We are prepared for your arrival and greet you with a warm and genuine welcome that extends to your guests

We help you settle in comfortably and be a part of our community so that new neighbours quickly become old friends

We are knowledgeable and offer relevant and up-to-date suggestions for getting the best out of our location and city so that you can make the most of the opportunities it presents

What do employees need to do at each touchpoint in order to deliver this?

## DELIVERING YOUR BRAND PROMISE



Harley has always been able to create this sense of engagement with the customer through the basic attitudes of freedom, individualism, enjoyment, self-expression, self confidence.... a whole range of words you can use to describe this rugged individualist, the independent thinker, this person that chooses his or her own course in life

**John Russell,**  
*former VP and MD of Harley Davidson*

## What makes a brand promise work?



### It cannot be made lightly, it has to be delivered

The key to winning customer loyalty - and advocacy - with your brand promise is to meet or exceed the promise with every customer in every interaction with your company. All of an organisation's processes, products and people must be aligned and designed to deliver the brand promise every day.

The simple proposition of the sandwich chain Prêt A Manger is that it is 'passionate about food' and it promises not to compromise quality in any way. This is why Prêt goes to the unusual lengths of using a four-foot wooden paddle to mix the ingredients for its fruit and oat slice ("too pulpy otherwise"). Prêt has made a clear, unequivocal, and highly successful decision as to what it stands for.

The principle of intentionally and consistently delivering on your promise is critical: whether it is 'Never knowingly undersold', being able to return the product 'no questions asked,' or being able to get 'a good night's sleep-guaranteed' in your hotel room.

**To truly excel in creating loyalty however, your promise must tap into creating value for customers over and beyond the product or the services you sell.**

Fulfilling social and ego needs become as important as meeting the functional needs. Wearing a pair of Timberland boots is as much about making a personal statement as it is about keeping your feet dry: self-actualisation', as the psychologist Maslow called it - the desire to fulfil one's potential; to fulfil your 'most deeply felt need'.

Harley Davidson is probably one of the strongest brands to capture this thinking. It promises 'we fulfil dreams'. It creates a sense of engagement with customers through tapping into their inner desires. It is the ultimate brand promise.