

What is the passion in your value proposition?

By Rob Martin, Managing Director, BrandSync, a strategic branding advisory firm focused on growing middle market companies.

As you look to develop future earnings and establish a competitive advantage for your company, it is important to answer the question, "What is the passion in your value proposition?"

This question is relevant for all types of personal and professional endeavors and the answer is essential in building relationships with those you hope to influence. Successful companies such as those studied in the book Good to Great have all discovered a singular, focused value proposition that generates passion in employees, customers, partners, and shareholders alike.* Below is a description of the dynamics and measures involved in discovering and focusing on a stimulating value proposition.

Value Proposition Basics

Everyone associated with a company's culture should feel passionate about the enterprise and its purpose. By conducting a holistic discovery process within the organization, a company can identify the one thing it does best and focus the operation on the passion that is responsible for its success. The core competency that has enabled the company to differentiate and achieve growth always lies at the heart of a company. "Great" companies isolate this value proposition and allow it to guide all decision making regarding acquisitions, human resources, marketing, sales or any other strategies for growth it pursues.*

Value Proposition Development

There are four key steps to find the passion in your value proposition that will be the driver in making your company go from adequate to exceptional:

1. *Internal Discovery* - It is important for the entire organization (including investors) to feel represented in a process of discovering their company's value proposition. A properly orchestrated internal discovery exercise enables the functional positions in an organization (e.g., finance, marketing, operations) to understand their role in focusing the organization on the activities that ignite its passion.

This understanding of roles will provide focus and reinforcement of the value proposition by the organization. Focus and passion will drive operations and communications in a way that will resonate with customers and compel them to do business with the company or firm.

2. *Consensus Building Process* – Developing a consensus of support for a singular value proposition necessitates managing political and interpersonal dynamics that will undoubtedly arise when a company's positioning strategy is being determined. The outcome of a successfully managed process will enable employees, customers and stakeholders to appreciate decisions made for the "greater good." Third party analysis of original research conducted with a representative sampling of the organization and customers makes it

impossible to deny the merits of pursuing the most compelling value proposition and the activities that will keep the passion going. A consensus of support is easily achieved when it is very apparent that the process to discover the value proposition is both rigorous and objective.

3. *Customer Insights* – Choosing the best value proposition requires collecting feedback from customers and potential customers regarding the alternative value propositions that a company believes it delivers best. Enabling customers and potential customers to explain why they are passionate about the value proposition they choose will inform the development of the brand strategy and will help maintain that passion throughout the organization – and the market.

4. *Market Analysis* – Studying the market to make certain that the key value proposition is a unique competitive advantage and an excellent market opportunity enables a company to “own” a given category or industry.

Value Proposition Success

The most successful value propositions are those that have the passion vividly apparent in a company’s culture to motivate employees, stakeholders and customers in a meaningful way. Volvo’s “safety” and Southwest Airline’s “freedom” value propositions are directly connected to what drives their company’s bottom lines and what puts customers into the seats they sell.

BrandSync recently completed a project for QubicaAMF Worldwide following the merger of AMF Bowling Products and Qubica Worldwide. The former was an old line US bowling equipment manufacturer, and the latter an Italian software technology company creating revolutionary games and operating systems for the bowling industry. On the surface it appeared that neither company was related, either strategically or culturally. However, the discovery process revealed that AMF and Qubica are both passionate about providing innovation to make bowling center proprietors successful. The “partnership” value proposition that has emerged now unifies the cultures and operations of the combined organization and is a highly motivational value proposition in old and new markets.

Conclusion

For a company to be great, employees, stakeholders and customers must feel inspired by its value proposition. That value proposition must also bring significant bottom line benefit to the organization from financial, operational and marketing standpoints. A deliberate and scientific inside-out consensus-building process involving discovery and analysis should be pursued to find the passion in your value proposition.

About the Author

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