

Managing Brands Globally through Operational Brand Management



New Challenges in Global Branding

As organizations grow, market pressures drive them to expand outside their home markets. Initial growth is often opportunistic and ad-hoc in nature - but as local markets mature they require a more structured approach. Without this structure, the practical side of brand management (operations) and the corporate strategy can easily become misaligned.

Successful global companies understand the risks of not effectively managing the brand, as well as the processes required to achieve this. MPP Brandz research has shown that the capitalization of a company with a well-managed brand can expect to be 200% greater than a poorly managed brand over ten years.

The value of the brand cannot be overestimated, and this is supported by The Economist, who states that, “even firms that once competed on technical excellence or cheap prices are now trying to build and leverage their brand.”

Global Information Management (GIM) is the discipline of understanding the processes, people and technology which underlie the internationalization of an organization. An effective GIM approach, as part of a comprehensive corporate strategy, enables an organization to accelerate the creation of content for a global audience, ensuring that content is contextually consistent in message and meets the strategic goals of the global initiative. Managing brands globally requires a focus on Operational Brand Management, as this involves the practical nature of delivering the brand.

Why “Operational” Brand Management

Global organizations today have more market penetration than ever before, no matter what their size. Thanks to technology and the breakdown of trade barriers, small, medium, and large businesses can grow a brand globally and sell to markets anywhere in the world. The challenge for the typical company with global aspirations is reaching that global market with a clear, consistent message of your corporate identity and what you do in a way which resonates strongly and immediately with the global customer.

Global branding covers all aspects of creating a consistent consumer feel, regardless of geographic location or cultural background. Much research has been performed around the

creation, evolution and valuation of brands; however, there are far fewer resources available to the Global Marketeer on how to operationally manage the creation, evolution and usage of the message throughout the extended organization. As managing the brand becomes critical to global growth, so too does keeping tight control on the way Sales, Engineering, Technical Publications, Web/IT, Procurement, Legal, etc, all communicate that message.

An effective approach to Operational Brand Management – the mechanics of managing a consistent message for global use – can make the difference between a successful global organization and a domestic organization that sometimes sells “abroad”!

The Challenge for the Global Marketeer

A global organization needs to understand the scope of its ‘brand’. The concept of brand covers not only the images, ideas and trademarks of a firm, but encompasses all company-specific knowledge, or intellectual property. A truly global business requires a truly uniform brand message which respects local requirements. However, brand control is often distributed across business silos, regions, or factionalized departments.

Driving the brand message through the organization successfully cannot be achieved by mid-level marketing managers or centralizing corporate resources alone. To achieve the cross-functional and cross-regional penetration of the brand message, while aligning the organization globally, executive sponsorship and support (preferably board level) is critical.

How Operational Brand Management Works

Operational Brand Management is a combination of people, processes and technologies which allow an organization to consistently and accurately drive its brand in the language and culture of choice for the consumer in a manner consistent with corporate strategy.

This focus, implemented both horizontally and vertically across the organization will ensure consistency of message wherever consumer-facing content is touched. Language and cultural issues which directly impact existing processes for Product Development, Operations, Sales and, of course, Marketing must also be tackled.

Call to action

SDL has worked with some of the world’s largest and most successful brands, including Coke, Microsoft, HP, Mercedes, Philips, Dell and Samsung to help them operate more effectively on a global scale.

These clients each participated in an SDL Discovery Day to review corporate goals, existing management practices and the processes that underlie the day-to-day work of operationally managing the brand. SDL then returns to present its analysis, findings and recommendations in an interactive discussion session.

Topics typically cover organizational recommendations, management processes, resources and technology options. To learn more about clients who have faced similar challenges, or to contact us directly, please go to www.sdl.com.