

Good morning everybody, Dennis Engelbrecht Digging Deeper.

Today I want to talk about keeping your brand promise. I know some of you out there are thinking, "What brand promise?" Well, that's really the first step I guess is understanding what is your brand, and what is your brand promise to your customer? When they think of your company name, what are they thinking about? Are they thinking, "Boy, that's a quality organization, they really get it done. I love those people." Or, "They've got great marketing." They're thinking something. And are they thinking what you'd want them to be thinking I guess is the essence of having a brand promise and then starting to create a brand promise.

I was just this morning having a meeting and the client when asked that question, "What is your brand? What do you stand for?" They were uncertain of what that was. And that emanated from the conversation, "Should we get all of our frontline people, our estimators, our business development people together and talk about how they're representing the company?" Well, how are they representing the company if they don't know what your brand stands for, what you stand for, what your differentiation is?

That's your brand, and it should be very clear to you and clear to your employees exactly what that is. And for many of you, it's multiple things, and it might be different things even for different divisions or aspects of your company as well. Because if you work in the industrial sector, safety might be one of the highest things, but then you've got a group out in let's say the commercial sector where finishing on time is the brand promise. So, it can be slightly different, but it certainly shouldn't be inconsistent within your company.

Now let's go back to who creates your brand? First of all, whether you create it or not, your brand does get created by your performances over time. So, a little bit is determined by your history. People have had an experience with you, and they have an idea of what your company stands for, good or bad, hopefully good.

So, if you want to create your brand or recreate your brand or tweak or enforce your brand, it helps to be strategic with that. Where are you going with your markets? Where do you want to be as a company? Who do you want your customers to be? What do they want and what do they appreciate? And how can you give it to them? And then ultimately within those questions should be your brand and your brand promise of who you are.

So, who creates it? Again, a little bit of history and performance, but hopefully your top leadership creates it. And then who delivers it? Well, the easy answer to that is everyone. Your brand promise is a team event. And what do I mean by that? Well your customers interact with you in many different ways and with many different people in your organization. And what they take from each of those interactions comes to form how they feel about your company, how they feel about your company name, your brand, your differentiation. All that comes from all of those interactions with everybody.

A recent case, I was reading about somebody, I guess this was political, but apparently one of the lawsuits around the election got submitted and they misspelled, "District," three different times on one page. So, if you're a law firm and you're trying to present a certain thing, well misspelling the same word three different ways on one page is probably not the way to get your point across and get people to listen to you.

And the same thing happens with you. You have emails that go out, you have brochures, you have daily communications. And people get a feeling about you based on the professionalism, the readability, the extent to which you get to the point, the extent to which you meet the needs of the customer in doing that. So, all of those things might be things you don't think so much about, but how do they reinforce your brand, reinforce your brand promise?

Now let's think about the various people who have contact with your customer. And obviously there's your project team, right? And the entire team that's on there, because even think about this, you may have a project engineer that kind of sits in the background and crunches stuff. But when your customer walks into that room and they get a nice greeting, or

they get respect, or on the other hand they don't ever look up and they treat them like they're not there, there's a message being sent. And is that the message you want being sent? But every last person on your project team has an effect not just through their actions and how they're executing the project, but how they interact with the customer, with the architect, with the engineer, even with the end users should they come through.

And people that work in the healthcare industry and occupied facilities, they really get that. They understand that or they wouldn't have the ability to work in those facilities. And everybody there is in tune with the end user in that kind of situation. And that's really what we're talking about. Everybody on that project team is a big factor in keeping your brand promise.

But even before them your business development people, your pre-construction people, your estimators, again they all have had interactions, they've all provided various estimates, budgets, papers that people have looked at. Were they easy to use, easy to read? Did they get the point across? Was it what the customer was looking for? All of those interactions again go back to your brand promise.

Then there's your back office, and you might not even think about your back office in this way, but let's just say you prepare a billing for your customer and you send that billing out to your customer. Well, is it accurate or does it have errors in it? Do you have to redo it oftentimes? Did it come timely? Is it easy to read and sort through and see? Does it have the appropriate back up that's expected? All of those things. And then if there's an interaction that goes behind that, a follow-up or some questions, how are those treated? So, there's interaction with your back office.

Let's just say the client calls and your phone gets answered by somebody in the company. How is that handled? Is it handled with a smile? And again, you say, "It's a phone call, how can you tell if they're smiling?" You can tell on the phone if somebody is smiling. If they appreciate you calling. Or, on the other hand, if they come across as you're an inconvenience to maybe they're doing a crossword puzzle or something like that. We hope not, but somebody who's on the phone, or somebody who walks into your reception area knows the difference.

Let's just say you deliver them water in the conference room when they're in there for a meeting. Do you do it with a smile on your face? Do you ask how they are today? All of those things, all of those interactions form an image.

Let's go to senior leadership. First thing is does senior leadership interact with those customers. If not, what message does that send? In other words, "I never heard from the president of the company, the COO, during my entire project." Well, that sends a message. Or if they did hear from you, what was that interaction like? Were you in telling mode or were you in empathy mode and asking mode and finding out how the customer felt and presenting that sort of service image to the customer?

Again, all of those things come together. And then even beyond that there are little things. And little things, your brand promise is often encompassed in your slogan. What's your company's slogan? Do you have a company slogan? What do you put on your fencing on the project for example? What does it say on the side of your trucks? I was going past a truck this morning from Baker Roofing and I probably won't get this right, but on the back of the truck comes the original Mr. Baker's quote, "We do good work at a profit if we can, but at a loss if we must."

Now, that's been his brand promise since the beginning of that company. And it's right there on the truck. And I last worked with them probably 15 years ago, but I still remember that brand promise and I remember Francis Baker and how he delivered on that promise and how he made sure his whole organization delivered on that promise.

A few other little things you may not have talked about. Birthday cards, calls, recognition. Year-end gifts, Christmas gifts. All of those things send the message. So, think about your brand promise, how you deliver it, how you can improve it. And remember it's a team game, and make sure everybody in your team understands that, realizes it, and participates in a Superbowl winning delivery of your brand promise. Again, Dennis Engelbrecht Digging Deeper. Thanks for tuning in.