

* Patrick Dixon is author of 16 books including Building a Better Business, and has given conference keynotes at events for many of the world's largest corporations on issues such as multi-channel marketing, image, brand and consumer trends.

What if we could add 10% to the impact of every global brand, 20% to the power of every mission statement?

Too far fetched?

Every month we are exposed to \$1 billion in advertising, and 30,000 brand names are clamouring for our attention. The result is market fatigue, caused by overload.

At the same time, many old brand-building techniques are dying. For example it is now almost impossible to build high levels of national awareness through advertising on a limited number of peak-time TV shows, because of the huge increase in channels, online use, home cinema watching and so on.

A large corporation can easily spend more than half a billion dollars on a new branding exercise, coupled with new mission statement, corporate logos, identity, strap-lines and product re- launches.

Let's pull back a little.

Even if we only add 0.5% to the impact of a marketing campaign, that may translate to a huge number of additional sales and a significant gain to the organisation. But in many cases we may be able to do far better than that. And it's all about...

Warming up the Brand

I often talk with leadership teams of large corporations about "warming up the brand".

Branding is about how a product is perceived, rather than the nature of the product itself. So how do we adapt existing branding, logos, corporate image and advertising campaigns to the changing values of this new world?

Many brands are cold, clinical - and fail to connect with the passions people have.

The world's top 10 brands measured by value: \$ billions

- 1 Coca-Cola (\$69.6)
- 2 Microsoft (\$64.1)
- 3 IBM (\$51.2)
- 4 GE (\$41.3)
- 5 Intel (\$30.9)
- 6 Nokia (\$30.0)
- 7 Disney (\$29.3)
- 8 McDonalds (\$26.4)
- 9 Marlboro (\$24.2)
- 10 Mercedes (\$21.0)

The greatest and most valuable brands in the world are powerful symbols of our age, part of our history as well as our daily lives.

Long-lasting brands are special: gaining affection of more than one generation. Few brands last more than a couple of decades.

Disney, Nike, Starbucks, Calvin Klein – these kind of **brands connect with emotion**, travel world-wide and transcend culture.

Power of Memories

Memories are deeply connected to brand power. Take the food industry - think about a favourite food you enjoyed as a child and the chances are it's still sold in a similar way today.

But most brands die even faster than the short-lived companies that invented them – 60% of new companies are out of business in less than five years in the UK and US. You never heard of them and never missed them, or their logos, mission statements, brands and advertising campaigns.

Brands have to adapt or be left behind. You can focus all you like on sales graphs and tables, brand mix, product lines and brand equity yet miss the most important fact of all: are your customers still passionate about what you do?

People are changing in what they count as important, the brands they like, the advertising they approve of.

Future Feeling

New emotion is replacing old thinking so it is important to get a feel of the future.

Old thinking is cerebral – new thinking is visceral. From mind to heart, tangible to intangible.

One example of the new approach to life is the dramatic growth in alternative medicine, now used by 66% of all 35-49 year olds, who are often reacting against rationalistic Western medicine and its formal research methods.

The **alternative medicine industry is worth around £1 billion a year** in the UK while in the US there are well over half a billion consultations every year with alternative therapy practitioners.

Another example is the **feminisation of management**, with a new emphasis on emotional intelligence, intuition, empathy, co-operation and relationships, rejecting a macho, aggressive, confrontational, task-orientated approach.

A third example is the boom in “**mind and spirit**” **book sales**, offering a fusion between mental, emotional, mystical and spiritual worlds. Even brands are becoming like a religion.

As we have seen, every marketing proposition is the promise of better things. Brand religion is all about the belief that a particular brand will indeed create a better world. It's usually linked to similar belief in the values of the company.

Brands create their own “religions” or faith systems, and we can actually watch this “faith” process at work in people's minds. Nuclear Magnetic Resonance is used in medicine for high-resolution imaging of organs like liver and brain. Scientists can use it to “watch” people think.

“I love my iPad”

Different areas of our brains light up, linked to products we are using or consuming – or think we are.

So people who believe they are drinking Coca-Cola rather than Pepsi reproduce their own classic “Coca-Cola” brain activity patterns, even if the brand has been switched without their knowledge. It's all to do with brand image, suggestion, previous experience and emotion.

How does your brand measure up? What parts of your customer's brains are you connecting to? How can you connect more powerfully? How warm and personal is your brand and marketing?

First step: **listen, watch, understand the very air your customers breathe**, the details of the lives they live. Only then will you begin to see how to gain their attention in a more personal and relevant way.

Adapted from [Building a Better Business](#) book by Patrick Dixon.

