

CORPORATE JUNGLE

How to truly make your brand stand out

By Michael J. Pallerino

An illustration of a zebra's head and neck, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red tie. The zebra is positioned on the left side of the page, partially obscured by large, vibrant green leaves and ferns. The background is a dense, dark green jungle scene with various types of foliage.

It's Saturday morning in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and the drive through at the local Chick-fil-A already is 40 cars deep. On this particular Saturday, the rain is pouring down – a very poorly timed present from Mother Nature. It doesn't matter, really. The customers, as if drawn by some hypnotic force, continue to come in droves. As the line nudges forward, a traffic cop – another Saturday morning staple – kindly keeps order among the masses. On this day, several teenaged employees take turns walking the customers who dared to venture inside back to their cars.

Somewhere in the huddled throng of clanging windshield wipers sit Colby Jubenville and his son. The accomplished entrepreneur, inventor, speaker, professor and author marvels at the dedication of the patrons, himself included, to the Chick-fil-A experience.



That's right – the experience. Sure, there's the sandwich – that boneless breast of chicken, seasoned to perfection, hand-breaded and pressure-cooked in 100-percent refined peanut oil and served on a toasted, buttered bun with dill pickle chips. And there's the experience: The plotting, planning and eventual trip to Chick-fil-A, where a host of fast food professionals armed with Southern hospitality and grace provide you with a family experience that's consistent every time.

"You have to know your customers," Jubenville says. "And Chick-fil-A knows its customers. All those people in that line are going for the experience, not the sandwich. They are one of those brands that know how to combine the brand with the culture. It's what makes them stand out."

Standing out is the passion that drives Jubenville. You can read all about how and why in his book, "Zebras & Cheetahs: Look Different and Stay Agile to Survive the Business Jungle," which he co-wrote with business coach Michael Burt.

"Zebras & Cheetahs" provides an insightful look at surviving in today's corporate jungle – a world where the big don't eat the small, the fast eat the slow. Carefully crafted and delivered in a way that all brands – personal

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Group Director, CBX



and business – can follow, the book is a user's guide to becoming bigger, stronger and faster than your competition, whatever and whoever that competition may be. "

There are no secrets today," says Jubenville, who also is principal of Red Herring Innovation and Design. "It starts by knowing who you are. The truth is that you are what your clients and your market say you are. If you want to get better at branding, you have to start by having better conversations with yourself. And you have to focus on that conversation."

Finding your 'collective passion'

The exercise of becoming – and delivering on – the perfect brand drills down to asking yourself two simple questions: What is the promise I am offering and how do I deliver it? It's that simple, Jubenville admits. The strategy that ensues, which involves garnering the buy-in from everybody – your organization, your customers and your employees – is a principle he calls "collective passion."

If you're looking for the simplest explanation of that, the die-hard college football fan will give you his University of Alabama example. Deep in the heart of Tuscaloosa, Ala., Jubenville says that coach Nick Saban is building one of the greatest examples of his



principles – a brand that is known for its rabid unwavering fan support. “Nick Saban is building passion on all levels. He is hard on his players and, oftentimes, deemed unfair in how much he demands, but there is a reason behind that. He has created a set of standards that has defined the buy-in. Those standards create the buy-in, which builds chemistry.”

There’s a story Jubenville likes to quote about an old Navy captain who once told him that everybody wants to know three things when it comes to the task at hand: Who’s in charge? What are the rules? How are you going to hold me accountable?

“Wouldn’t it be great if everybody just asked themselves that question? In today’s corporate jungle, the biggest challenge we have is finding good people to work better. We have to find them and then get them to act alive. Those three questions help. Most brands have the strategy they want to help them stand out, they just have to implement it.”

Dustin Longstreth is a big believer in the tribal mentality concept. The VP of strategy and group director for branding agency CBX, he believes that brand building is a team effort that starts with a mindset of living for your people, not off them. “You have to adopt a tribal mentality. Yet, so many

brands today still speak in terms of marketing to a ‘target’ that is completely separate from the people they interact with every day. That’s an occupier’s mentality.”

As a result, the brand efforts feel like a con game, and eventually, people revolt. It is about being one with your pack in order to build the trust, empathy and intuition needed to quickly act and react in ways that add value and build loyalty.

“Follow us, join us, share with us (and eventually buy from us) are the new calls to action in the connected age,” Longstreth says. “You really have to know your purpose – why do you play the game? Seems like a simple question, but it’s amazing how many brands don’t have an answer. Positioning is a helpful framework to remind you what messages your brand needs to repeat, but it doesn’t do much to inspire advocacy. That’s the job of purpose.”

Linda Popky, strategic marketing expert and author of the upcoming book, “Marketing Above the Noise: Achieve Strategic Advantage with Marketing that Matters,” says

that with all the mediums available today, brands can and should stand out. You don’t do that by adding to the chaos and noise in the marketplace by attempting to chase every possible new avenue, but by focusing on the key fundamentals.”

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of Leverage2Market Associates. “They need to work hand-in-hand with the rest of their company, including sales, product development and, more important, IT. The days of being driven by creative concepts are over. We need to be part of the overall business strategy, not the execution and deployment team.”

At the end of the day, the mark of a brand comes down to Jubenville’s two simple questions: What is the promise I am offering, and how do I deliver it? “Can you make your customers money [and/or] can you save them money? If you can’t do either, they’re moving on. You have to know your true value. If you don’t, you have to figure it out.”