



Corporate Image Management A Marketing Discipline for the 21st Century

Book Excerpt Epilogue

There is no single marketing or management panacea. The marketing arena is too dynamic and diffuse for a single methodology to be applied to each and every situation.

Although numerous recent attempts have been made to proclaim a single solution, none have proven universally sufficient. We have gone through service quality, total quality management, quality is free, re-engineering, down-sizing, building conglomerates, spinning off unrelated businesses to focus on ‘core competencies’, globalisation, ‘think global, act local’, and other permutations. In a similar vein, the impression one would get from browsing through the management shelves at the local bookstore is that we have been: searching for excellence, driving brand value, playing territorial games, operating under fatal illusions, planning strategically, and trying to drive our competitors crazy while, at the same time, re-engineering the corporation and transforming the organization.

Phew! That’s a lot of activity.

But activity does not equate to action. One of the problems, of course, is that most of these attempted activities tend to look at only one aspect of the organization: production, finance, marketing, leadership, organizational structure and behavior, etc. Even re-engineering (some might say *especially* re-engineering) was not a balanced approach between the organization’s internal and external worlds. Perhaps unintentionally, many also became one-off approaches, the kinds of activities that management could check off on their management scorecards during shareholder reporting seasons.

The Corporate Image Management process can help you overcome these problems. Corporate Image Management is a holistic, never-ending approach to creating the leadership, direction, and corporate behavior patterns that will enable your organization to develop strong relationships with all of its key constituents (internal as well as external). When implemented properly, Corporate Image Management is a greater precursor of marketplace success than is any other core competency defined for the organization: product innovation, price leadership, distribution prowess, clever advertising campaigns, excellent service quality, superior manufacturing capabilities,

efficient process management, visionary leadership, skills in change management, or financial strength.

At the same time, Corporate Image Management is not a cure-all for every organization. Organizations go through various stages of corporate development, face different marketing challenges, and have varied human and financial resources to put to use. For those not already engaged in the process, the implementation of an integrated corporate image management process into the organization may be too costly, too time consuming, and take too much senior management attention away from the realities and priorities of the day. In effect, the cost of the medicine and the time for implementing the cure may outweigh the current costs and troubles caused from having a sick or ill-defined corporate image.

On the other hand, every organization has both internal and external customers and other constituents with which it needs to partner and form relationships. Thus, at some time in the organization's existence (and for most, the sooner the better), every organization will need to assess, define, and pro-actively manage the projection of its corporate image through its corporate behavior patterns.

As we have stated before, the battlefield for marketing success is shifting from the minds of the consumers (where perceptions are formed from projected corporate imagery) to the emotions, hearts and souls of consumers (where relationships are formed and maintained from both projected corporate imagery and experienced corporate behavior patterns).

There is no greater marketing issue facing senior managers in today's increasingly competitive markets than the issue of Corporate Image Management.

Lastly, the impact from properly managing the corporate image will become greater and more pronounced as organizations move up the marketing excellence ladder into the realms of relationship excellence and partnership excellence. This is what makes Corporate Image Management a strategic marketing weapon at the cutting edge of marketing and management technology.

Corporate image management is *the* marketing discipline for the 21st Century.

This Chapter is excerpted from Corporate Image Management: A Marketing Discipline for the 21st Century by Steven Howard.

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