



Article Reprint

Hurting Corporate Brand Image by Steven Howard

Often what needs changing or modifying to fix a deteriorating corporate image is not how the corporate logo appears or is used, but several other aspects of the organisation's visual communications to its audiences. Many of these other visual components go entirely unnoticed, until a proper and sweeping visual audit is conducted.

To illustrate, here are some of the image damaging conditions that have been discovered on corporate image management projects in which this writer was involved:

- A publicly listed manufacturing concern had a left a broken window pane unreplaced for a period of at least six months, yet it couldn't understand why its message on its new quality improvement initiatives were not believed by security analysts,
- A manufacturer preached a policy of treating all employees equally and putting customers first. Interestingly, the only reserved car park slot in the entire company was directly in front of the main entrance. The spot was reserved for the firm's CEO, who was transported around town in his chauffeur-driven car. Both employees and customers had to walk carefully around his vehicle to enter the main lobby as there was not much space between the car and the front doors. Since he was dropped off at the front door anyway, there really wasn't any need, except for ego satisfaction, for his luxury marque to be positioned at the main entrance. So much for equality among employees and consideration for customers.
- Companies like to place their logos everywhere, but it really isn't necessary. One company had its logo and name painted (by hand) on the large trash containers placed around the manufacturing facility. The lids for these waste bins were locked and chained to steel pipes. We never learned if this meant that the organisation's management didn't trust the staff not to steal its huge trash cans, but we did convince them that it probably wasn't a good idea for customers and security analysts visiting the plant to see the company's name emblazoned so prominently on trash receptacles.

- One foreign bank had only three branches, but was using four different advertising agencies to produce its marketing communications materials. It was little wonder that the various products and services on offer from this bank showed little visual resemblance to each other, though the corporate logo was consistently used in all materials thanks to a very detailed graphics standards manual.
- A major retailer of fine, upscale watches prided itself on having one of the most complete ranges of premium watches available in its outlets. It couldn't understand why traffic patterns in its stores were below expectations, until it was pointed out that the glass doors to each store featured decals and labels for every credit card and discount card imaginable. Anyone paying thousands of dollars for a watch wasn't going to be enticed into the purchase just because they could use a plastic payment card or a discount card. Once the decals were removed and the aluminium frames around the doors changed to quality-looking teak, both traffic levels and sales volumes increased in all outlets.

What contributes to the perception of a corporate brand? In a word: everything.

The Author

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