

Lessons Your Can Learn From the T.J. Maxx/Marshalls Ad

June 1, 2009

Liz Goodgold

Brands Stand for One Thing Only

As your brand blogger, I feel compelled to reiterate the #1 secret to great brands: *they stand for one thing*. It is the antithesis of “all things to all people.”

When I want a great hamburger, In N’ Out Burger tops the list. Coveting new shoes? I think Jimmy Choo. Ready for the latest computer? Head straight to the Apple store!

See what I mean? These are brands that do one thing magnificently well. Furthermore, they don’t clutter their message. They have high recall, great imagery, and create an emotional connection (can I make it any clearer that I am pining for the new Jimmy Choo gladiator sandals?).

Time for a Brand Intervention

You can imagine how dismayed I was therefore when I eyed the latest [T.J. Maxx/Marshalls ad](#). It portrays friends tracking down Tracy to have an “intervention” because she is paying too much for designer labels. The major problem? The ladies come running with shopping bags from *both* Marshalls and T.J. Maxx.

We, as consumers, usually don’t know the parental lineage of our brands and in fact, don’t care! Putting different brands in the same commercial just because they have the same ownership makes great economical cents for CEOs who are watching every penny, but makes no sense for shoppers.

You Can’t Combine Brand Advertising Just Because They Share the Same Owners

Let’s let my imagination go wild and envision how TV spots would look if they adopted this discount retailer’s misguided philosophy:

“Ready for summer? Ready for khakis? Our cool pants are just \$10.99 at Old Navy. Feeling like you want the comfort of The Gap? Feel free to purchase these khakis for \$24.99. And, ready to overspend on khakis? Come on over to Banana Republic where the exact same pair is marked up to \$49.99.”

Or, “Summer is the perfect time for a barbecue. Start grilling the Ballpark Franks, serve a delicious Sara Lee cake, make sure to polish your shoes with Kiwi, and don’t forget the Good Knight insecticide to keep away those pesky mosquitoes. Good days made better with products from Sara Lee.”

See how ludicrous this type of advertising is? These type of ads don’t build mindshare.

Brand Lessons For You

The point of this blog is for all of us to recognize that we wear many different hats. In my case: speaker, author, consultant, mom, maid, dishwasher....Of course, you do too. Don't make the mistake of introducing yourself with all of your many jobs at the same time. *Pick one introduction appropriate for your audience at a time.*

Let me give you an example. Suppose you are a graphic designer, copywriter, mom, and Usana sales representative. When asked to introduce yourself at a networking event, you start by rattling off that you are a "full service design firm that can create all collateral materials, design your web site, write your brochure and oh, I also sell products guaranteed to make you look and feel better." See the problem? You will lose all credibility. Hone your message to one thought, one brand at a time.

I always welcome your comments and questions via [email](#).

Until next week....Liz

Meet Liz Goodgold



Speaker and author Liz Goodgold is a considered a fireball of energy with over 25 years of experience in marketing and branding. She is the author of [RED FIRE BRANDING: Create a Hot Personal Brand and Have Customers for Life](#) and [DUH! Marketing](#).

Sign up for her FREE Hot Topics newsletter jam-packed with advice on building your brand at www.redfirebranding.com or email her your questions at Liz@redfirebranding.com