

The Power of Branding Your Business School

It doesn't matter what industry a business is in, brand power can be the difference between average and exceptional profits. Take Baskin Robbins for example, the US-based ice cream company attributes much of their success to their "98% brand awareness with 80% of the people in the United States." In fact, you can look at almost all of the top corporations in the world, from Samsung to Nike, Airbus to United Airlines, and Ernst & Young to Pfizer, and immediately recognize their logo, their colors, and their style. But, branding isn't just for big business. It is critical for business schools too. Today's students are very much in tune with brands. After all, every student wants to graduate from a school that is well-known and well-respected among their family and friends.

On the contrary, before you get started defining your school's brand you need to create a strategy for your school—a brand strategy. Branding isn't just about a single logo or advertisement, it is a series of events that can be put together to form a clear picture. This picture says what you sell, how good you are, and why consumers should buy your services. It is critical to have a strategy for your brand. If not, your marketing collateral will not share common goals, it will not share a common visual identity, and worst of all it may be communicating conflicting or inaccurate messages about your school. All of which, can lead you away from your desired position in the market.

If your school already has a strategy in place, perhaps it is time to revisit whether or not it has been effective or even implemented fully. It may even be time to add new elements to your plan. For example, at Butler University's College of Business, the school has recently launched a campaign that will provide key messaging and graphic identities to the existing Butler brand. The goal is to build awareness of the school's unique mission that is associated with "real life, real business." The school has included visual elements throughout their website, a unique domain name (www.ButlerRealBusiness.com), as well as videos from students and alumni.

Some other areas that schools are enhancing are taglines, visual identities, and online elements. For instance, let's discuss taglines. A tagline is something most of us remember. For example, Honda uses "The Power of Dreams," and Nike says, "Just Do It." Taglines resonate with how an organization wants to be perceived in the eyes of its consumers. Universities use taglines too. The University of Texas at Austin says, "What Starts Here Changes the World." The University of California, Los Angeles says, "Where Great Futures Begin." However, taglines are not solely for the university as a whole. Business schools

also have very powerful statements about who they are. Even degree programs have taglines—particularly MBA programs.

Now, with every tagline comes a visual element. Perhaps it is a logo or an advertising campaign. Nonetheless, human audio sensations are accompanied by visual images. If your business school does not have an established color scheme and logo, it is time to create one. And, this doesn't mean solely producing print materials. It means creating an existence that resonates across both print and electronic media—particularly media. As prior AACSB studies have found, students gain the majority of their data about business schools and programs online.

And of course, if your business school doesn't have a brand strategy in place, now is the time to develop one. Especially, if you have a high-profile degree program like the MBA, part-time doctorate, online master's degree, or innovative undergraduate discipline.