

## How Should B2B and B2C use Branding Online

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The definition of branding varies all over the board. There are some very specific online definitions, as well as a more expansive and completely encompassing definition, of what a brand is. The one that I believe is really at the heart of the matter is: *"A brand is a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer."*

All companies are in the process of branding themselves. How well they do this, depends on being aware of the process. There does appear to be three brand groups.

### Brand Group One

Quite a large number are doing it without any forethought into the process. Of this group some are quite successful at developing a good [brand awareness](#). They developed it not necessarily because they tried hard to brand themselves, but because they had a good foundation from which they started, with a good product or service for which there was a perceived need, and followed some ethical guidelines in marketing, advertising, and sales, while developing and expanding their customer base. They pride themselves in excellent products or services while providing a customer support or service that the business-to-business, "B2B" or business-to-consumer, "B2C" clientele appreciate. This in turn builds brand loyalty and trust.

### Brand Group Two

Others are also placing a brand awareness on themselves, albeit, it is a very poor one. Some in this group have very poor customer service or even a prideful attitude about their business. Maybe some even have an attitude that they are on top of their market and there is no need to strive to be better. After all, they feel that they have the market cornered and all roads must lead to them.

### Brand Group Three

Then there are the companies that are in the process of working hard to continually improve the perception with Mr. "Joe Customer." Their company image is constantly being fine tuned and developed because they recognize the need to build that good perception in the mind of the consumer. They recognize that if "Joe Customer" is not treated properly and there is another company which can supply the product or service at a reasonable cost, the customer is likely to "jump ship" with the old and move to the new.

How long this takes to occur is dependent on the established brand loyalty, the degree to which the old product or service is out of line, and the cost or perceived value of the new. There are other factors that could alter the speed at which this progression would occur. For example: A company could try to use their monopoly of a market and subtlety or not so subtlety change the outcome by directly altering the choice "Joe Customer" has.

All three groups can have crossovers from one group to another. For example: larger companies with multiple divisions may have good branding at one division, while another division has poor brand and/or brand awareness with the general public. Small and medium size companies may very well have great branding strategies for their own local area location, and have established themselves in a very positive manner in the mind of the local consumer, but are not known outside their local market.

Branding should occur on all fronts. I believe that the process actually starts at the top, with the leadership. From there it needs to permeate throughout the organization with employees taking part in the effort of building up the company's perception with

their public market, especially on the customer service side. The branding process should then filter throughout the entire structure of an organization, with one of the items that should positively be addressed for good branding strategies is to consider how the Internet can be a powerful online tool for a company's brand. With the yearly increase in the number of consumers and business-to-business clientele on the Internet growing and with search engines being one of the keys for finding companies online, serious considerations need to be given in the development of brands.

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