

BrandFitness™: How Healthy Is Your Brand?

This approach to brand assessment is a self-diagnostic tool that enables companies to make a fairly quick assessment of the health of their brands. The scoring and findings of this brand check-up allow brand managers to better understand the overall fitness of brands and use this knowledge to devise more effective brand-building strategies and programs.

The following checklist (and discussion points) is clearly not meant as a way to evaluate tangible functions or features of the brand offering. It's meant to focus on things that can influence the more intangible dimensions and values of the brand – those things that generally come along with brand name and reputation. This process can also be used to uncover and articulate the goals that new brands should strive to achieve.

In conducting this examination, we advise respondents to think about each statement in terms of where the brand – typically the corporate brand – stands today, then check the most appropriate response. A guide to scoring responses is found at the end of the checklist.

BrandFitness™ Short-Form Checklist and Examination

1. Clear statement of overall brand purpose and direction:

- Yes 0
Not yet 2

Discussion

- What business are you in?
- What does the brand now stand for in the marketplace?
- Where do you see the brand in two to five years?
- What's unique about the brand?

Comment: _____

2. Brand values known and supported:

- Yes 0
More intuitive 1
Not really 2

Discussion

- What are your company's brand values?
- What qualities or characteristics seem to be enduring about the brand?
- Have these changed over time?
- How do customers perceive the brand's values?
- Is there a widespread understanding of these values throughout the company?

Comment: _____

3. Alignment of corporate brand values and company culture:

- Clearly and consistently aligned throughout company 0
- Somewhat aligned, but we need more clarification 1
- What we promise and what we actually do is different 2

Discussion

- How do you describe your company culture?
- Is the link between brand values and culture widely recognized?
- Are brand values clearly communicated? How are they communicated?

Comment: _____

4. Top management support of brand-building efforts:

- Strong 0
- Adequate, but could be better 2
- Pretty shaky / not yet 4

Discussion

- For top management:
 - What does brand mean to you?
 - How important is brand in overall business strategy?
 - What brands do you admire and why?
 - What is your company doing today to build the brand?
- For others:
 - How much does top management understand about brand building?
 - How much is brand-building part of the overall company business strategy?
 - How supportive are they of these efforts? Provide recent examples.

Comment: _____

5. Would you describe your company as:

- Customer-driven 0
- Technology-driven 1
- Sales/profit-driven 2
- Competitor-driven 3

Discussion

- How would you describe the company?
- How would customers?
- Why do you say that?

Comment: _____

6. Does your company consider brand building as:

- A core business function 0
- Virtually synonymous with marketing 1
- Primarily a marcom/advertising responsibility 3

Discussion

- How systematic is your company's approach to brand management?
- Is brand a consideration in nearly every business decision?
- Is brand building considered a high-level strategic business issue?

Comment: _____

7. Internal brand champion:

- Strong champion with authority 0
- A champion with the responsibility 1
- Not at a level to make a real difference 3

Discussion

- In the organization, who is the highest ranked person you could call a brand champion?
- Is brand management responsibility fragmented or consolidated?

Comment: _____

8. Brand management practices:

- Right up there with the best in our class 0
- Room to improve but doing as well as most 1
- Inconsistent, not yet where we need to be 3

Discussion

- How systematic/disciplined is your company's approach to brand management?
- Are practices consistent globally
- What about training and education about best practices?

Comment: _____

9. Internal brand development planning and procedures:

- Strategic and disciplined 0
- Pretty strong 1
- Need some improvement 2
- Pretty much ad hoc, tactical 3

Discussion

- What is your marketing, advertising, and communications planning process:
 - Who has budget control?
 - How are budgets established?
 - Who has review and approval authority?

Comment: _____

10. Role and effectiveness of internal communications:

- Successful role in supporting brand building efforts 0
- We see a need to improve and are working on it 1
- It is not one of our strengths yet 2

Discussion

- What type of internal communications initiatives do you have?
- Do these communications sit in marketing, or do they target company-wide?

Comment: _____

11. Internal brand training and education:

- Quite effective, we're satisfied with our efforts to date 0
- Moderately effective but mostly in certain departments/geos 1
- Not very effective, we need to be doing a lot better 3

Discussion

- What internal programs do you have to build brand?
- Do you think your company "lives" the brand?
- Is performance linked to "living the brand?"

Comment: _____

12. Internal brand development measurements and metrics:

- In place and helping track internal brand development goals 0
- We're planning to develop some, but haven't yet 1
- Interesting idea, but we're not doing much in this area 2

Discussion

- How do you measure success of internal brand development programs?
- Do internal brand development efforts get recognized in performance appraisals?

Comment: _____

13. Integration of communications plans:

- Planning done jointly and strategically 0
- Coordinated but not well integrated 1
- Not done, needs much improvement 3

Discussion

- How well integrated are your programs across different channels of communication?
- Is database marketing done well?
- Who drives the integration planning process?

Comment: _____

14. Website as part of the brand experience:

- Highly consistent with brand promise and identity 0
Some good features, but not fully supportive of brand goals 1
Lack of consistency with brand promise/identity 3

Discussion

- How aligned is the website with the overall brand promise and values?
- Is the website seen as a strategic and effective brand communications tool?
- What are resources dedicated to building and maintaining website?

Comment: _____

15. Sharing knowledge about brand building across the organization

- Easily accessible information and current knowledge 0
Some knowledge sharing, but difficult to access or incomplete 1
We don't share across the company, need to do better 3

Discussion

- Do you have a brand management Intranet?
- Is it used as a source for knowledge sharing across the company?
- What other communications programs do you have to distribute information?
- Are research results, customer satisfaction studies, etc. distributed to appropriate people?

Comment: _____

16. Long-term brand identity strategy:

- Clear, comprehensive plan in place 0
Identity guidelines exist 2
Not yet 4

Discussion

- What is the company's brand identity strategy:
 - Does it include personality?
 - Are the materials prepared in different places
 - Are they aligned and consistent with each other?

Comment: _____

17. Brand-naming convention:

- Simple, consistent and well-documented 0
Can generally keep things under control 1
Product managers still come up with names 3

Discussion

- What is the company's brand-naming strategy:
 - How well is it working?

Comment: _____

18. Number of product brands and/or sub-brands to support/manage:

- Limited number, well defined 0
- Getting to be too many to handle well 2
- Way too confusing, need to cut back 4

Discussion

- How many different product brands do you have today?
- How many a year ago?
- How are they different?
- Is that difference meaningful to the marketplace?
- What is the budget behind each product brand?
- What new products are coming up?

Comment: _____

19. Product/brand segmentation strategy:

- Very tight and well defined approach 0
- Yes, but overly fragmented & too many products 2
- Doesn't exist, we'll sell to anybody 3

Discussion

- How are your product brands segmented?
- What research supports that approach?
- How well is the segmentation strategy working?

Comment: _____

20. Marketing support and communications budget:

- Enough to do the job -2
- Not as much as we'd like 0
- It comes and goes 2
- Severely under-funded to do the job 4

Discussion

- Review budget for communications activities:
 - How is budget established?
 - What was it last year? What will it be next year?
 - How does it compare to that of the competition?
 - (these seem to just focus on communications. Is it supposed to be that focused or broader?)

Comment: _____

21. Implementation of current brand positioning across all communications :

- External messages are consistent with and supportive of the brand positioning 0
- Doing ok, but some parts could work better 1
- Struggling to get all the parts aligned 3

Discussion

- Comment on the implementation process:
 - How well integrated is the web-site, PR, advertising, recruitment messages?
 - Role of internal communications

Comment: _____

22. Advertising support:

- Consistent, strategic, distinctive, and high quality 0
- Good ads, but lacks consistent funding or strategic direction 1
- Inconsistent, tactical, feature-focused 3

Discussion

- Review advertising programs:
 - What are the opinions inside the company?
 - What are the opinions of the ad agency?
- How healthy is relationship with advertising partners?
- Is advertising integrated across all channels including the Internet?
- Is there a central 'quality control' group for all advertising efforts?

Comment: _____

23. Brand building ROI:

- We have a very good idea of results from our brand building investments 0
- Periodically we track and measure results 1
- I wish we knew 3

Discussion

- What kind of tracking or measurement is done for specific programs?
- Is funding adequate for tracking and measurement?

Comment: _____

24. Attention to details:

- No brand-building detail is too small 0
We know we should be doing better 1
Come on, who has the time? 2

Discussion

- How consistently are little things done to support the brand-building efforts?
- Is there a common look and feel to all printed material?
- Are brand guidelines provided for sales, support, and other customer contact people?
- What type of brand quality control is in place?

Comment: _____

25. Knowledge of customer:

- Constant and current feedback in place 0
Adequate research done recently 1
We really should be doing more 3

Discussion

- Review research about customers:
 - How well is it linked to areas like customer satisfaction and field sales support?
 - Is information summarized and distributed broadly?
- Are your customers loyal? Do you use research to support this?

Comment: _____

26. Committed, profitable customers:

- Strong loyalty, repurchase rates known 0
Profitable, but not sure if customers are loyal 1
Who really knows? 3

Discussion

- How much of the business today comes from repeat customers?
- How do you know the degree of your customer commitment /loyalty versus that of the competition?
- How much is a customer worth over the expected "customer life cycle"?
- What is being done to target more profitable customers?

Comment: _____

27. Post-purchase relationship building:

- Strong and consistent reinforcement, on a personal basis 0
Periodic programs to target & acknowledge good customers 1
Little to no on-going relationship with good customers 3

Discussion

- Is there an up-to-date, comprehensive customer database?
- Are customer groups prioritized in order of importance?
- What programs and communications target the customer base?
- What's the resource allocation and budget for this?

Comment: _____

28. Multi-national branding:

- Consistent, shared values and messages,
localized as appropriate 0
Common goals but fairly autonomous 1
Every geography goes its own separate way 3

Discussion

- How do you communicate brands globally?
- Who controls the budget?
- How often do the geographies talk and get together?
- Is there a central group or liaison to communicate new information?

Comment: _____

29. Multi-national brand planning:

- Constant, close communication and country involvement 0
We talk but could do better 1
Corporate pretty much controls direction and funding 3

Discussion

- Is there real-time dissemination of communications messages and materials?
- What is the global planning process for brand building, including advertising & other communications efforts?

Comment: _____

30. Awareness:

- High, unaided awareness in key strategic markets 0
- Okay, but could be better 1
- Not at competitive levels, needs boost 3

Discussion

- How does your awareness (especially unaided) compare to that of the competition by key market segment?
- How current is the information?
- When will the data be gathered again?
- What are resources & budget dedicated to this research?

Comment: _____

31. Quality perceptions:

- We know we're right up there with the best 0
- We think we're doing okay 1
- Not one of our strengths, unfortunately 4

Discussion

- What data is there on quality perceptions?
- What does quality mean to the customer?

Comment: _____

32. Familiarity:

- Most target customers know us well 0
- It's getting better 1
- Way below what it should be 3

Discussion

- What do you know about the depth of familiarity for the brand – and about how it compares to that of your competition?
- Do you have a consistent definition of familiarity across the company?

Comment: _____

33. Likeability:

- Most customers enjoy doing business with us 0
- We're doing better than before 1
- Is it really important if they like us or not? 3

Discussion

- What, if any, measures exist on this beyond anecdotal evidence?
- How does it compare to that of competition?

Comment: _____

34. Image and personality:

- We have a desirable, distinctive image 0
- Image could be in tighter focus 1
- Not as clear or well defined as it could be 3

Discussion

- Review of current research should answer this.

Comment: _____

35. Associations attached to the brand:

- Strong, motivating, and differentiating 0
- Weak, could be more motivating and differentiating 1
- None of the above 3
- Strong and differentiating but not motivating 4

Discussion

- Review of current research should answer this.

Comment: _____

36. Accessibility to customers:

- Highly accessible and responsive 0
- We're improving all the time 1
- Not a strong point for us, yet 3

Discussion

- What are you doing to build a closer relationship with customers?
- How is it working?

Comment: _____

How Fit Is Your Brand?

Total up the score for each question. If multiple people are taking the checkup, tally the scores and use the average to determine where your brand or brands fall in the “fitness range.” Be aware, however, that it’s not really the score that’s most helpful here; its looking at the individual responses to each question and determining the most pressing issues and priority actions to take. No individual or brand can get in shape overnight. True fitness comes from a focus on the kind of brand-influencing activities and actions that you can isolate and strengthen through consistent and conscientious work on an ongoing basis.

Fitness Range:

- 0 – 21 Top shape, ready to go the distance – not much room for improvement.
- 22 – 36 Admirable performance – but could use more regular workouts.
- 37 – 52 Just getting by, too soft – need to develop a more disciplined regimen.
- 53 + Flabby, weak brand – major fitness overhaul needed.

For more help buffing up your brands, contact Marty Brandt (650) 854-4581. Or visit www.probrand.com