

# LookingInward

Issue 1 | Volume 1

Premier Issue



## INTERNAL & EXTERNAL BRAND ALIGNMENT

Internal Branding  
**WHAT EXACTLY  
IS THAT?**

Using Social Media  
**TO PROMOTE  
YOUR INTERNAL  
BRAND**

**The Source for Internal Branding.**

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# FROM THE EDITOR



As Inward celebrates our 15th anniversary as the single source for internal and external brand and change communications consulting, it is appropriate to acknowledge the

people who were inspirations for who we are today. As a result of their encouragement, we have been able to serve the most respected companies in the world and make a difference in their operations.

The most influential person was my good friend, teacher and mentor, Dr. Michael Hammer, the creator of the Reengineering movement. In 1993 he wrote a book entitled *Reengineering the Corporation*, which quickly became the playbook for corporate efficiency, turnarounds and process redesign. It was a worldwide best seller, and Michael was cited soon after by Time Magazine as 'America's 25 Most Influential Individuals'.

I got to know Michael when I moved to Boston to become the Chief Marketing Officer at Arthur D. Little. We met through our children, who become close friends at school. Later our wives became friends and remain as close as sisters to this day. At backyard barbecues and tag football games, Michael would share his frustration that change within companies was not taking hold as it should because of the lack of buy-in from employees. He used to challenge me, "You're an ad guy and know how to persuade people to buy things. Why not try to persuade employees inside companies to embrace change and process redesign!" He was referring to my past experience as a senior vice president with Y&R. He had something there, and that was when I started thinking of starting a company that would talk to employees by educating, motivating and engaging them to embrace change. I developed a framework using breakthrough creative, experiential communications and message architecture, followed by recognition and reward systems. We tried it with a couple Arthur D. Little clients and it worked!

Michael saw me launch Inward in 1998 and was always eager to offer support and suggestions in both the good and the challenging times. Unfortunately, he passed away before his time three years ago. I miss him as a professional advisor but especially as a dear friend. I am not sure I ever thanked him, so I am saying it now to him and to his family.

The second inspiration was my friend and colleague Paul Higham, the former CMO of Walmart. We served together for 14 years as marketing board advisors to the US Postal Service. Over dinner and cocktails, we would often talk about my idea of creating a company that would focus on creative and breakthrough communications for corporations going through major change. During one of our sessions at the Postal Service, he offered the following thesis, "As marketers, we sell out to our customers and we sell in to our employees. But, the most important part of 'selling out' is 'selling in'". Paul went on to give a number of examples and some amplification as to why employees are much more likely to believe a company's message than customers and how they are likely to model their behavior based on how they are presented in their advertising.

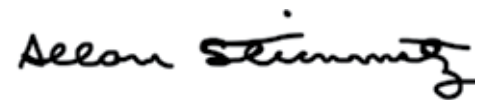
After Paul retired he supported our mission by coming to Boston to present his thoughts on this topic at Inward's Breakfast Forum in front of 250 guests and participants. That, too, had a big impact on our credibility. He is now a rancher in Taos, NM, and enjoying life to the fullest. I thank you, Paul, for your early support and encouragement.

The next person to thank is someone I have lost contact with, but should acknowledge nonetheless. His name is Allen Kane. He was the CMO of the US Postal Service in 1998 and later retired. The last I heard a few years ago, he was running the Postal Museum on East Pennsylvania Avenue in the old Post Office Building in Washington DC. After listening to our discussions and Paul Higham's ideas about "Selling Out/Selling In" and the need to motivate all postal workers to go beyond just delivering mail, Allen stood up and said, "We need inward marketing!" A light bulb went on over my head. That was it—the name of my company! Six months later, we launched Inward Strategic Consulting. I don't know where you are today, Allen, but thank you for that epiphany and for naming our firm.

Lastly, we would not be around celebrating this milestone if it weren't for our clients who have trusted us, embraced our ideas and allowed us to provide value. Thank you to all our clients, friends and supporters. We appreciate you and hold you dear to our hearts. Today, we are ten people strong in six offices across the US. We continue to grow through thought leadership, great talent, proprietary methodology and a strong, client-focused service model.

This first edition of *Looking Inward* is our way of giving back to you. It presents our thinking, thought leadership and prescriptions for your success as you navigate change. As always, we welcome your comments. For updates from me and our staff, please visit our website, sign up for our blog, and follow us on Twitter.

Thank you.



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Allan is the CEO and founder of Inward Strategic Consulting, an internal/external branding, change management communications, team alignment and market research consulting firm with offices in Boston, Chicago, Orlando, San Francisco, Bentonville, AR and Minneapolis. He has over 30 years' experience in marketing strategy, branding, change management, advertising and communications. His background includes work for Ford Motor Company, US Postal Service, Ericsson, Pitney Bowes, Campbell's Soup, Zurich Financial Insurance, Walmart and several High Tech companies and start-ups and professional services firms. Prior to establishing the firm, he was Senior Vice President and Corporate Director of Marketing for Arthur D. Little, a premium management consulting firm; where he was responsible for the firm's brand identity, business development, lead generation, advertising and communications. Prior to ADL, he was the Worldwide Director of Marketing and Communications for Andersen Consulting (Accenture). Prior to Andersen he was with Young and Rubicam for ten years as Senior Vice President and Director of Marketing in a variety of management and new business roles. Allan also served as a member of the US Postal Service Marketing Advisory Board and was formally a board member of Bertucci Brick Oven Pizza.

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# THE BEST WAY TO BUILD BRAND ADVOCATES? RECOGNIZE THEM!

*By: Philipp Hornthal, Managing Director - Chicago Office | Inward Strategic Consulting, Inc.*



Have you ever wondered what motivates people these days? Bet you thought it was the golden carrot, right? But you are wrong – it's being appreciated, recognized and rewarded for hard work.



If you want to improve your company's bottom-line results, appreciating your employees is critical. Take it from Sam Walton, someone who knew this and, perhaps, explained it best when he said, "There's absolutely no limit to what plain, ordinary working people can accomplish if they're given the opportunity, encouragement and incentive to do their best."

If you want to build a workforce that is engaged and focused, recognition and reward is essential for driving desired employee behavior and performance. By establishing programs that award your employee assets, you can create a culture of appreciation and recognition that increases levels of employee engagement within your organization.

While "thank you" is a great place to start, recognition is much more than that. Companies boasting best practices in this area know this, and they've created a variety of ways to reward their employees meaningfully – trips, special discounts, company-specific catalog shopping sprees. In addition to providing real added value for employees, these programs also result in increased employee satisfaction, improved performance and a reduction in turnover. Simply put, employee recognition is essential to business success.

Over the years, these programs have evolved to accommodate the ever-changing needs of businesses and their employees. Currently, there are exciting new developments in the world of employee recognition programs – developments that have the potential to impact your business and your branding success in a big way.

**At Inward Strategic Consulting we call this Recognition 3.0.**

All employees are not motivated in the same way. And not all recognition programs serve the same purpose; however, the most common are length-of-service (5, 10, 20 years of service recognition) and performance-based (employee of the month, department, etc.) At present, nine out of ten companies have employee recognition programs in place, and employees are taking notice. In fact, these programs play a significant role in recruitment efforts. Oftentimes considered an important component of total compensation, they can also play a crucial role in differentiating competing companies from one another.

Getting the attention of potential employees isn't all these recognition programs do. They tend to have a significant impact on keeping existing employees engaged. It's been noted that companies with high employee engagement had a +19% in operating income and a +28% in EPS (Earnings Per Share) while companies with poor employee engagement had a declining operating income and a -11% drop in EPS (Towers Perrin Global Workforce Study, 2008). It's no surprise companies are willing to invest in these types of programs.

### **Recognition 1.0 – Company to Employees**

Typically this type of program recognizes an employee with an award (e.g., employee of the month, years of service, etc.). While this recognition may provide the individual with a badge of honor, it may not necessarily be motivating or require any above-and-beyond performance.

### **Recognition 2.0 – Company to Employee and Peer-to-Peer within Company**

These programs build upon the foundation of Recognition 1.0, incorporating an additional level of recognition from peers/ coworkers. Being recognized by those you

work with on a daily basis lends itself to solidifying respect among team members as well as recognition on a potentially more frequent basis.

### **Recognition 3.0 – Employee to Social Network**

The newest approach, and the one we'll shift our focus to, takes recognition to a whole new level, beyond the walls and firewalls of the organization and into the realm of the social network. It engages employees and encourages them to share the pride of recognition from their workplace with their entire social network. They become advocates, reaching out to the people that matter to them inside and outside of the workplace. And both the individual and the company benefit from the power of exponentially extended recognition.

Today through social networking, people love to share their experiences with one another, and with an average of 455 people within their social reach, someone is always out there to listen to what they have to say. An innovative company, Blue Calypso, delivers a patented mobile social marketing and advertising platform that enables brands to leverage customer relationships, encouraging brand loyalty and increase spending by having your employees promote your company. Why not recognize your employees when they advocate and endorse your products and brands?

**If you want to build a workforce that is engaged and focused, recognition and reward is essential for driving desired employee behavior and performance.**

Innovative recognition programs leverage the power of social media by encouraging employees to personally endorse your brands and/or services and receive recognition in return. These programs also encourage colleagues work to their social circles. As their calls to action are delivered, you gain the mind share of your employees, their friends, their friends' friends and so on. You also gain personal endorsements, generate buzz, ignite conversation, drive purchase intent, increase loyalty and attract new customers.

In addition to rewarding employees for endorsing, sharing and enjoying your brand(s) with others in store and/or

online, this type of program also recognizes employees by giving them a voice and a stake in your marketing success. As advocates, they earn special perks by sharing, through texts and social posts, their personalized company endorsements about the brands they love. And your company reaps the benefits of the trackable incremental sales your employees drive along with increased brand advocacy, deepened loyalty and return spending opportunities.

Ready to start your Recognition 3.0 upgrade? Here are some guidelines for helping you get started on transforming your employees into your best brand advocates.

### 1. Define Your Business Goals, Results and Behaviors

- Demonstrate the company's commitment towards appreciation in a tangible way, one that shows employees the company genuinely cares about them.
- Maintain clarity when designing your program. Be sure it includes opportunities for immediate and periodic recognition that triggers repeat behavior.
- Create a performance culture that encourages improved performance and motivates employees at all levels to strive for excellence.
- Provide employees with a social media platform that allows them to easily share their success internally or with their social network.
- Allow them build their own community and blogs as a platform. Let them dish out the accolades and 'atta boys' to their colleagues.

### 2. Build Your Program with Business Goals, Results and Behaviors in Mind

- Select an approach. Be sure it will have an impact that is appropriate for the size of your organization. What's right for a 50-person company is very different for 500- or 500,000-person companies.
- Communicate expectations. It's no good if no one knows about it, so be sure to provide communication that is clear and consistent. Since buy-in at all levels is critical, be sure



messaging is also relevant and appropriate for your audience.

- Keep it simple and fun.

### 3. Stay the course

Once you launch the program, stick with it. Let it go viral internally. It's up to you and each other to ensure your employees are being recognized for the right reasons. Consistent execution is key for employee engagement, participation and program success.

- Recognize and repeat. The beauty of recognition is, what gets rewarded gets repeated. When this happens within your company on a regular basis, business goals are met, employees behaviors/attitudes change and you get results.

### 4. Evaluate

There's always room for improvement, so measure results along the way. In addition to celebrating what's working to make your program successful, you'll have the opportunity to identify areas needing improvement and the ability to make necessary adjustments.

So what are the keys to success in today's

environment? Begin by understanding what motivates your employees to become more engaged with your brand and your strategic initiatives. Second, acknowledge that old ideas of cash and gift incentives are no longer enough – consider, instead, innovative ideas of recognition that give employees a voice and say in how things get done. Peer-to-peer and social networking can facilitate higher levels of engagement and greater recognition. Recognition does not always need to be given from the top. In fact, it is more meaningful when it comes from a colleague or someone across the sea who may be a stranger altogether. Remember to monitor the plan, seek feedback from the participants who are the recipients of the recognition and awards, and make changes to improve effectiveness accordingly.



**Phil Hornthal** serves as Inward's Chicago Office Director. Phil brings over thirty years of diverse integrated marketing communications to Inward Strategic Consulting.



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# DIALOGUE MARKETING™

## PUTTING BRANDING AND MARKETING TO WORK FOR YOU

By: Allan Steinmetz, CEO | Inward Strategic Consulting, Inc.

I had a very interesting meeting a couple of weeks ago with the COO of a major Fortune 100 company with revenues in excess of \$5 billion and over 80,000 employees worldwide.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how to “rebrand” the company and accelerate a new corporate strategy of growing revenue, entering new markets, increasing competitiveness, and becoming more distinctive. It didn’t take long for me to realize that there was quite a bit of confusion between “branding” and “marketing.” The executive appeared visibly frustrated by his previous meetings with two large and traditional brand identity firms who talked about identity standards, design continuity, and logos. He was clear about one thing: he liked the current logo and identity and wasn’t about to change them. What he was looking for, however, was a process to unite his people behind a common vision and values. He also wanted “branding” to help accelerate business development.

Using our Dialogue Marketing™ approach, I explained the difference between branding

and marketing; and I think we will get his business. I was, however, left wondering why many other senior executives cannot make this distinction. I’d like to take a shot at clarifying the difference, and then explain how Dialogue Marketing™ unites these two distinct activities into a single, integrated process.

### Branding vs. Marketing: is there a difference?

Being the enlightened renaissance man that I am, I went straight to the internet and found several different definitions for branding and marketing. The best definition for a brand, I thought, was from Wikipedia: A brand is the symbolic embodiment of all the information connected with a product or service. A brand typically includes a name, logo, and other visual elements such as images or symbols. It also encompasses the set of

expectations associated with a product or service which typically arise in the minds of people. Such people include employees of the brand owner, people involved with distribution, sale or supply of the product or service, and ultimate consumers.

Defining marketing was not as easy. I found definitions that covered the gambit from advertising to a planning process to sales development and beyond. No wonder an executive who does not have day-to-day responsibilities for marketing is confused! Is marketing at a trade show branding? Is launching a new product or web site branding? The answer could easily be yes for most people, but there is a distinction that we must keep in mind.

Since I wasn’t able find a good definition for marketing, I am providing the one we use here at Inward Strategic Consulting: Marketing is a process of planning and identifying the desires of a target market and meeting them through a series of integrated tactical activities such as pricing, product features, distribution/selling, advertising/PR/promotions, and retailing. The goals of marketing are to outperform the competition, create demand, and maintain customer loyalty.

Now the distinction between the two definitions is clear. Branding deals with

the look, image, tone, and manner of the company and its products and services. Marketing is about communicating the company's brand through a planned series of integrated promotional and sales activities. It really is that simple. So why the confusion?

### Branding companies, PR firms, and management consultants muddy the waters.

Over the past 10 years, as definitions and activities have become blurred, people have come to see branding and marketing as the same thing.

One factor that has contributed to the confusion is the way that business has changed. A big part of the problem is our marketing and communications profession, with its zeal to grow revenue, develop client relationships, and expand business. The branding firms have extended their activities beyond creative identity, reputation management, and design to manage trade shows, write collateral, and produce sales events and videos.

Advertising and public relations firms, in addition to designing ads, logos, and tag lines, are entering new fields: interactive employee engagement, guerilla marketing, analyst relations. Some of them even compete with their sister brand agencies. It would be in the best interests of their clients to integrate their talents and capabilities, but they are all too busy morphing into amalgamated communications companies.

Then there are the management consulting firms, all about process improvement, measurement, and accountability. They claim to understand and care about the difference between good and bad branding—and certainly have strong

opinions if you disagree with them. But they do view branding as a matter-of-fact rather than a creative process.

They measure everything, applying marketing econometrics and analytics to project customer differentials and the inclination towards improved market performance and acceptance. (Did you have to read that sentence twice to understand what it is they do?) They have process maps, formulas, and models. Boy, do they have models!

To management consultants, branding is a marketing process and marketing is a sales process. They, too, have contributed to the blurring of brands and marketing.

Here it is: Branding creates a reputation, a look and image, a tone and manner, even an attitude that makes the company stand out to customers. Marketing launches that identity through sales, with an integrated plan of activities designed to reach the company's objectives.

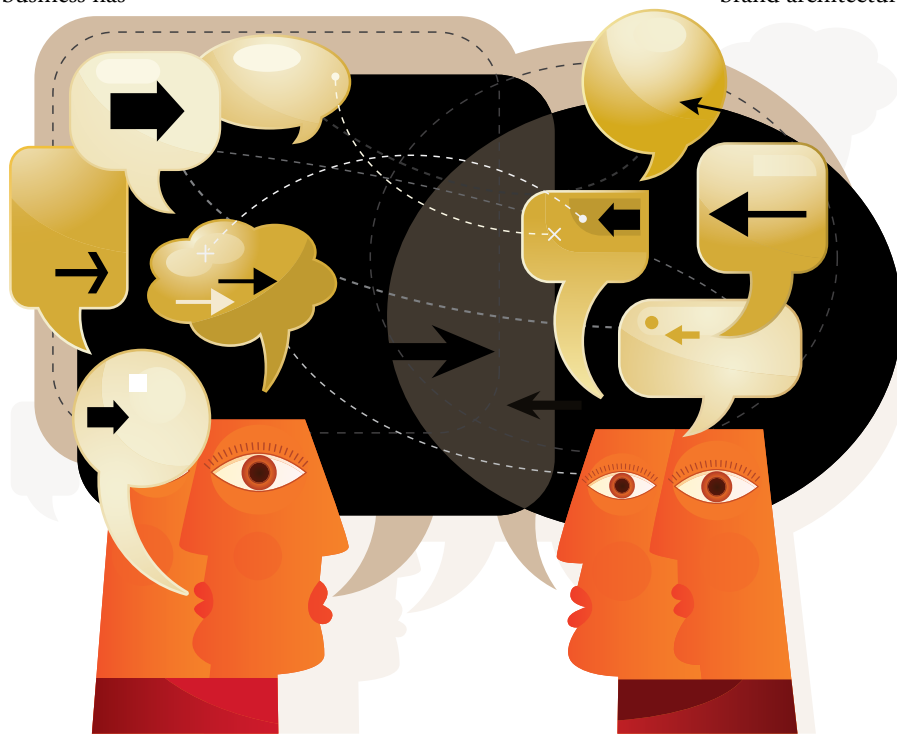
These two distinct activities are unified in a single process we call Dialogue Marketing™: There are two parts to the Dialogue Marketing™ process: establishing the brand followed by marketing and sales development.

### Part 1: Establishing the brand.

1. Dialogue Marketing™ starts with brand architecture: establishing an image statement that examines the needs and wants of the target customer.
2. Next we explore the relative strengths, weakness, and opportunities of competitors in order to maximize their flaws for competitive advantage.
3. Third, we look at the personality traits of the company. In the absence of a unique audience or competitive differentiation, all which is left is the desired, and hopefully distinctive, personality of the company.
4. Last, we examine the key features and leverage points of the company. In other words, what can this company's products and services provide that others cannot duplicate? It's the thickness of

Heinz ketchup, the safety of Volvo, the everyday freedom of travel with Southwest. Identification and association with such distinctive traits is the best cure for the "me too" syndrome.

Once we distill branding to the simple essence of these four ideas, we begin to see the patterns that allow us to articulate a simple value proposition or brand



**Over the past 10 years, as definitions and activities have become blurred, people have come to see branding and marketing as the same thing.**

### Dialogue Marketing™ makes it clear again.

At Inward we believe that it is time to return to clear definitions of branding and marketing. While we acknowledge and reinforce that they are distinctive and different, we do need to recognize how and when they work together.

What we need is an integrated approach.

statement. The development of logos, tag lines, and creative look and feel comes after all this, not before.

## Part 2: Marketing and sales development.

Like any process, marketing and sales development should be repeatable, trainable, and coachable. That means it must be codified and methodical in its approach. It requires not only planning templates and documents, but also internal reviews and approvals against set goals and objectives—all measurable and accountable through research data.

Equally essential is recognizing that building a sales pipeline requires a sequential order of marketing activities that have momentum and move the customer through the hierarchy of effects (known as a purchase funnel). Simply stated, before customers can buy a company's products and services, they have to be aware of the product, consider it against the other choices available, prefer it over anything else, and decide to purchase it based on features, price, timing, and convenience.

There are four phases to funneling customers through the marketing and sales-development process:

1. The first requirement is an integrated marketing and communications program that builds awareness through mass communications such as public relations and advertising.
2. Phase Two deploys dialogue communications, direct response product brochures, sales materials, and market-research data to communicate with customers one to one, so they can learn about the product on their own terms.
3. After the first two phases, customers are familiar enough to take the next step—shopping. The third phase shifts to promotions and incentives that induce customers to buy. Tactics often include coupons, in-store displays, sweepstakes, discount bundled pricing, and merchandising offers for greater monetary value.
4. The last phase, after product purchase, is to maintain loyalty and retain the customer



## Create customer dialogue to build sales pipelines.

for life. Successful loyalty programs include regular rewards, special invitational events, customer advisory boards, and feedback. The goal in this phase is to keep customers happy. Not only will they keep coming back, they'll also tell their friends and associates how well they are treated.

### Branding and marketing done right.

Dialogue Marketing™ helps companies attain higher levels of performance and customer loyalty. Remember the Fortune 100 COO? As I explained to him, it is imperative to keep branding separate from marketing initially, then combine the two disciplines to grow the business. He left that meeting understanding that branding is about reputation management, while marketing is a tactical sales-development

process. By synchronizing branding and marketing and deploying them in the right order to the right people, with the proper message at the correct time, his company will realize its business objectives. So can yours.

If, like that COO, you would like to discuss Dialogue Marketing™ further, give us a call at 617-558-9770.



**Allan Steinmetz** is the CEO and founder of Inward Strategic Consulting, an internal/external branding, change management communications, team alignment and market research consulting firm.





# INTERNAL BRANDING

## WHAT IS THAT EXACTLY?

*By: Allan Steinmetz, CEO | Inward Strategic Consulting, Inc.*

Everyone knows what a brand is, and everyone knows what advertising is. Some of us may be confused about promotion and merchandising but most have a basic idea, at least, of what they are.

Lately, a lot of people have been asking me about internal branding. What exactly is internal branding? It's definitely a hot topic, on which seminars and workshops are offered all around the country. By my count, seven major internal branding conferences were held this past year, and we participated

in four of them, and even chaired one of them.

It's hot, but what is it? Very little is written that defines internal branding; so as one of the pioneers of this new branding phenomenon, I decided to pound a stake

into the ground with my definition. We have earned the right to do this, because, since we started our firm, we have been promoting the power of internal branding with our Inward Marketing Methodology: we really are the internal branding company.

Before I explain what internal branding is, let me clear up some misconceptions. It is NOT letting your employees know about your new advertising campaign. It does not consist of handing out t-shirts and baseball caps to announce a new strategic initiative, name change or company vision statement. Really, it is not anything remotely like these things.

So what it IS internal branding? Why is it important? When should I do it?

Here is Inward's definition: ***Internal branding is a cultural shift within an organization, where the employees become more customer focused and more business focused.***

You achieve this by an organized, communications and behavior driven process, which leads to a desired end state. Meanwhile, at all levels in the company, one big question is answered - "What's in it for me?" After they hear and learn about the internal brand initiative, every single employee should understand what job behavior you expect from them, and how they contribute to the company's success. You need to reinforce the behavior you want, and bring it into line with HR policies, internal communications and corporate marketing efforts and strategy.

Effective internal branding brings huge benefits. Companies whose workforces understand how they operate and make money perform better. Committed employees provide stronger performance and higher customer satisfaction.

Important data that supports this connection between understanding and internal change was released recently. This study by McKinsey concludes that change-management programs succeed only when employees at all levels - senior managers, middle managers, and the front line - share the will and the skills to change. McKinsey studied change programs at forty organizations, and found a strong correlation between good skills for managing change and the value an organization carries away from these programs. These skills, I would add, are the product of effective change communications and internal branding programming.

The more knowledgeable, convinced and supportive the workforce is, the faster you

can implement change. Strongly accepted change is sustainable, and that saves both time and money.

When all is said and done, successful internal branding lifts brand equity, customer focus and ultimately shareholder value. One of our high tech presenters at a recent conference shared startling numbers that demonstrated a powerful correlation between internal branding efforts, external branding efforts and shareholder equity. It's all about the facts, the data, the metrics and accountabilities.

**Here is Inward's definition: Internal branding is a cultural shift within an organization, where the employees become more customer focused and more business focused.**

So the question becomes, "How should a company do internal branding or Inward Marketing?" Here are some of key elements/ best practices we've gathered from studying this topic for the past fifteen years.

- A brand is a process driven, long-term proposition. Not a deliverable! And so is internal branding.
- Internal branding follows a sequential process; through which employees achieve internal brand success. There is a difference between communicating a message, getting it understood, and changing behavior.
- You must have senior leadership participation and involvement throughout the process of internal branding. You can't delegate this or let the managers drive it.
- Start with a clear company vision and purpose. If you don't have one, work with the senior team to establish one and communicate throughout the company by both words and action.
- Set clear objectives and well-defined roles at the outset, and revisit them throughout the process.
- Consider assigning dedicated people to internal change communication and internal branding. Let them create a sense of

such urgency that staff see no alternative to change.

- Conduct an audit of the enterprise understanding of the business objectives and strategy so you can address areas where people don't "get it."
- Internal branding, done well, allows employees to transition from being "Informed," to "Understanding" the information, to becoming "Committed", so that they "Change Their Behavior" in support of the company goals. As a result they should "Receive Recognition & Rewards" and positive reinforcement for changing their behavior.
- Recognize the importance of the customer and all their points of contact with your company: call and service centers, sales associates, statements/ invoices, advertising and more.
- Align your brand externally & internally. Let your inside be like your outside: what you say externally should be the same thing you say/do internally.
- Go for participation, consensus and employee dialogue. These work better than edicts and policies that travel down the hierarchy.
- Having "Employee Brand Ambassadors" is critical - involve a cross section of employees from all levels, who will promote the brand internally through experiential communication.
- Obtain metrics and measures before, during and after program implementation. Research your employees regularly and track their progress over time.
- Hard, Simple, Easy - Work hard to make complex concepts and ideas simple, so they are understood and communicated easily. Seek outside help from experts and consultants in the field - this is hard work, but with help in methodology and process, it can be done effectively.



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# EMPLOYER BRANDING OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

## A NECESSITY IN AN ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN

By: Steve Mamarchev, Vice President of Market Research | Inward Strategic Consulting, Inc.

The present realization of an economic slowdown possibly leading to a recession has sent many organizations scrambling to tighten spending, an action that most people would have been hard-pressed to foresee just twelve months ago.

The outlook of potential hiring freezes and massive layoffs has caused some organizations and their respective human resources gatekeepers to retrench and even eliminate recruitment and retention initiatives. Is this a smart decision?

This course of action may achieve minimal short-term gains, but also carries the risk of ending all-important dialogue with existing and potential employees. If an organization is to survive the onslaught of an economic downturn and negative press that so often predicates a business slowdown, it must hire and retain the best employees in the marketplace.

### Don't be afraid to act in these times

Your organization must be prepared to wait out the gloom prognosticators, and move forward despite the urge to do otherwise. In the past, most recessions of negative growth in the United States have lasted upwards of four consecutive quarters. Moreover, in some industries, the purchasing cycles may take an additional year or two to recover to pre-recession levels. Panic can set in.

Many organizations simply examine the

sales forecasts and cut spending across the board, which is likely to include a reduction or even elimination of communication expenditures to customer and employee constituencies. In essence, companies will no longer talk to their key audiences during a recession. This may spell disaster. Recent studies have shown that this reactive course of action may leave organizations vulnerable once the economy has regained momentum. Firms that drastically disengage in dialog with its core constituencies, be they customers or employees, often find their share of mind and market share reduced once recovery has begun.

From a staffing viewpoint, companies that retrench are likely to find themselves in a catch up mode, chasing those organizations that wisely tried to reach and embrace employee constituencies during the recession.

A senior HR professional must resist the temptations of departmental cutbacks and drastically reduced communications to employee audiences.

### Develop your Employer Brand

The astute human resources executive

should consider a proactive route, namely to engage in a corporate employer branding exercise to reach a broad array of audiences including current employees, potential hires, investors, influencers, and even the general public.

To the uninformed, employer branding may seem like marketing lingo. And indeed, it is. Marketing acumen is now firmly embedded in the mind-set of effective human resources communications. The best of today's HR professionals must recognize that they are corporate marketing communications strategists as well as human resources specialists.

Let's examine in detail what employer branding can achieve for an organization, and how it can be implemented.

### What is employer branding?

Employer branding is the development and communication of an organization's culture as an employer in the marketplace.

Employer branding effects the experience of being employed by a particular firm. During divergent periods of economic growth or recession, employer branding assumes that

all employees are discriminating consumers, to be engaged, won over and retained by employers.

Employer branding is the essence of the employment experience, providing touch points that commence with initial employer brand awareness, and continuing throughout the tenure of employment, even extending into retirement.

Employer branding is a distinguishing and relevant opportunity for a company to differentiate itself from the competition.

### What can employer branding do for an organization?

When properly planned and executed, an employer branding initiative can generate lively dialog between an employer and its employees, build a rationale for a 'mutual working arrangement', and establish compelling reasons to commit to the arrangement.

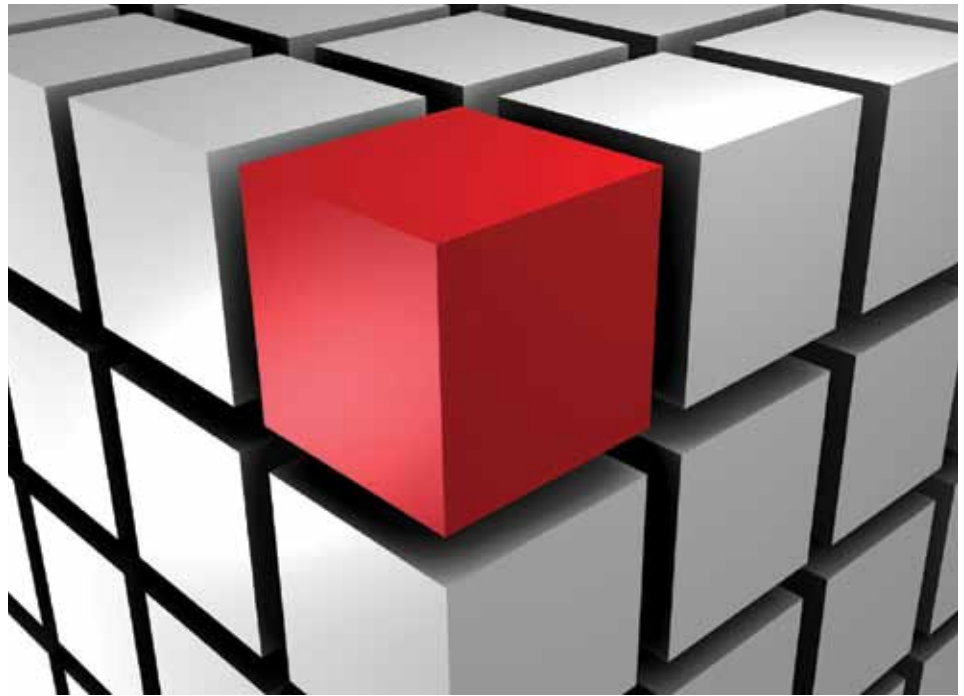
## Employer branding is the development and communication of an organization's culture as an employer in the marketplace.

A successful employer branding initiative articulates a reason why a potential employee should consider a particular employer.

Employer branding isolates the competitive advantages that one employer has over others in its marketplace in times of employment consideration. Employer branding also creates meaningful and lasting reasons for employees to remain loyal to their employer.

### How to implement an employer branding strategy

Here are six steps that will assist HR decision-makers in the implementation of a sound and effective employer branding strategy.



1. Develop a series of measurable and attainable business objectives for your employer branding campaign. Be certain to consider existing and potential employee groups, as well as key influencers and thought-leaders. Remember that in uncertain times like today, recruiting and retention objectives fluctuate, with potential hires sometimes rethinking pay and perk demands, and showing more loyalty.
2. Enlist the services of a recruitment advertising agency to focus on employer branding strategies and execution. There are many such firms that have a wealth of industry expertise, and will bring the employer brand to life in traditional and non-traditional media including Internet-based initiatives.
3. Launch an information gathering process that will identify and prioritize the needs and expectations of the target groups you wish to reach. Uncover the employees' perceptions of the existing employer brand through primary marketing research. Use a firm that has experience in HR communications strategy. This discipline will help determine how the employer brand has evolved in the mind-set of the target audience.
4. Have the agency create an employer brand strategy built on a foundation of vital information and data that will resonate with the target audiences. Validate this strategy with key constituencies.
5. Execute the employer branding strategy, following the creative and media guidelines established by your agency.
6. Monitor the progress of your employer branding strategy through a well-defined response management program. Be certain to track employees referrals, processed resumes, tendered and accepted offers, retention rates, and job posting hits. Remember to review action timelines for each of the aforementioned activities.

By adhering to these six steps, a company can feel confident that it will be a leader rather than a follower during economic downturns that appear periodically.

Careful planning and development of an employer brand will help draw positive attention to your company, bring life to recruiting efforts, and solidify retention rates.



**Steve Mamarchev** is the Vice President of Market Research at Inward Strategic Consulting. Steve is recognized leader in the areas of marketing research, human resources, communications and strategic planning.

# Aligning your brand takes the right strategy.



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Market Research  
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# VISIONEERING™

## ACCELERATING HIGH PERFORMANCE

*By: Yash Chitre, Vice President | Inward Strategic Consulting, Inc.*

All too often, complex and difficult issues arise from a variety of situations within a company. Silos and their divergent points of view can derail a company's ability to achieve high performance. Misalignment causes friction and, if not remedied, can grind initiatives to a complete halt.



Inward's Visioneering™ process helps to solve the misalignment problem by developing a shared team vision and an action plan to achieve that vision. So how is it done?

- Visioneering™ is an interactive facilitative process for articulating and creating a vision as well as the ability to achieve it. Perhaps the most central concept in actually bringing a vision into reality, or creating a desired future, is the concept of creative tension.

- It is a facilitative, participative offsite event that is designed to stimulate productive conversations and achieve abundant mentalities among the participants. I know that is a jargon-filled mouthful, so I'll put it in lay terms: Visioneering™ gets everyone on the same page by consensus, without angst and anxiety.

- Whenever we achieve a new vision that is different from current reality, there is generally a gap that we call creative tension. Imagine a rubber band stretched between two points. This tension seeks resolution, right? It does so because it is a natural part of the creative process.

- Creative tension can be resolved in one of two ways: (a) in favor of the vision or (b) in favor of current reality. When there is a big gap between the vision and current reality, people often begin to feel anxious, frustrated or discouraged.

A common response to this emotional tension is to attempt to relieve it, by either lowering the vision or by denying or overlooking aspects of current reality.

- By holding the vision while simultaneously acknowledging current reality, an enormous amount of energy is generated that actually draws current reality toward the vision. We are more able to take effective actions to create the results we want!

### An example of how it's done

Let's look at a case study to illustrate the point. A major global financial-services client tapped Inward to articulate and create a vision for their Global Marketing

& Communications team as well as develop the ability to achieve that vision. Inward quickly deployed the Visioneering™ methodology through a three phase-initiative. Each BU and division had their own idea of what marketing should be.

1. The first phase was intended to understand the multidimensional role of Marketing & Communications as it exists across the organization: the current reality. This included interviewing 48 senior executives (CEO and CMO's), one-on-one, from business units around the globe, the business division and the corporate center to uncover the present role of Marketing & Communications and to hear firsthand what is working and where improvements should be made.



2. Phase two was intended to establish a shared aspiration and to articulate a new collective vision for Marketing & Communications worldwide. Team alignment and a shared vision were achieved through a Visioneering™ session, a Marketing & Communications Summit, and working together to craft a new marketing and communication vision, mission, values and priorities for the company.

3. Phase three implemented and project managed the outcome of the summit to completion.

When the event was complete, the result was that all participants had:

- Contributed to the creation of a single vision and mission.
- They became part of a cohesive team with collective strategic and operation goals, whereby everyone had a clear assignment and role to achieve the vision.
- A shared understanding of who we are and how they work together as one global, virtual team.
- Agreed as a team on common priorities.
- A clear set of deliverables and tasks and were committed to make it happen.

### Takeaway thought

Each participant left feeling that they contributed to clearly defining the role and responsibility of marketing and communications and were confident that they reached their goals!

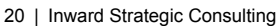
Visioneering™ works. It helps create a vigorous marketing and communications organization, strengthens the brand, changes the organization from reactive communications to proactive, and improves customer excellence through enhanced marketing capabilities. We have deployed it hundreds of times, from large multinationals to small startups to nonprofits attempting to serve the needs of all their stakeholders.

In the end, companies who have deployed Visioneering™ have raised the caliber and talent of their professionals so that they can become the next generation of management and achieve higher performance and results.



**Yash Chitre** is Vice President of Consulting at Inward Strategic Consulting. Over the past ten years at Inward, Yash has advised in several consulting engagements and business development initiatives regarding branding, team alignment and social media.

**By: Allan Steinmetz, CEO | Inward Strategic Consulting, Inc.**





Lately, it seems that every time you open a newspaper, read a blog or surf the Internet there is someone commenting about social media applications, such as Facebook and more recently Twitter.

Social networking websites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, now attract more than 1 billion visitors (the most recent stats I have seen say Facebook has 800 million users and LinkedIn has over 60 million) a month and is valued in the billions of dollars. Those statistics are staggering.

The past few years have proven social media is no longer an Internet phenomena but rather something that is here to stay that drives innovation, collaboration and unleashes human potential. It brings people closer together to create abundant conversations around topics that range from consumer topics like pregnancy to business topics like production throughput.

From a consumer perspective it has created an environment where the collective knowledge of a group is leveraged to the benefit of the individual user. For instance, I recently joined Facebook, because my son posted some photographs of a recent trip he took with his wife. As soon as I joined I was inundated by friends, relatives and old acquaintances that requested that I 'friend' them. My first reaction was how much time do these people spend on these sites? When I started digging deeper I realized it wasn't just for passing gossip and reconnecting with acquaintances, I realized that real knowledge on a variety of subjects is being conveyed.

### **Social Media Applications Work For Business Too**

Some of the most popular consumer social media are real people promoting their own views and sharing with others who have similar interests such as Moms talking to Moms, gamers communicating with gamers or political junkies talking to whomever. A simple Google search of blogs on your favorite topic will yield limitless results. The same can be said for business topics:

- Blogs: A blog (a contraction of the term weblog) is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular

entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. Check out the Inward Consulting blog as an example: <http://inwardconsulting.blogspot.com/>. We use Twitter to allow our readers to follow what we are doing every day ([www.twitter.com/inwardconsult](http://www.twitter.com/inwardconsult)).

- Social Media: Social media is information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies that is intended to facilitate communications, influence and stimulate interaction with peers and with public audiences, typically via the Internet and mobile communications networks. Sites such as LinkedIn, and even Facebook are very useful in disseminating and collecting information. Check out my LinkedIn profile at <http://www.linkedin.com/company/inward-strategic-consulting>.

From a business/professional perspective I have been a member of LinkedIn from its inception when a professional colleague who I respect asked me to join his LinkedIn group. At the time I had no idea what I was doing, why I was doing it or what benefit I would derive from making these connections? However, if my professional colleague made that request I couldn't deny him. Over the six years I've come to realize that it indeed is a very powerful tool for business development, asking probing questions and receiving advice, and finding talent for filling vacant positions. Our last two new hires came to us through LinkedIn referrals.

The referrals I receive through LinkedIn are substantial and have benefited the growth of our company in many ways. More importantly, I have been able to expand my relationships with people all around the world, in several networking groups to clients and friends in ways that I would otherwise rarely have a means to

communicate with them. I now have over 500 connections and 22 recommendations. If you would like to join my network, send me an email invitation, or let me know and I will invite you to join mine.

### **Using Social Media to Promote Your Internal Brand**

To take it one step further I started to investigate how social media applications are being used within corporate cultures as a medium to facilitate effective change/communications. What I found was amazing.

**I found that social media is now being used through corporate platforms to unify, and establish collaboration, create innovation, solve global client problems, establish corporate standards across large multinational corporations and the list goes on and on.**

Here are a few poignant examples:

#### **EMC has an internal social platform called Global/One:**

- Their goal was to build relationships on a one-to-one "personal reference" level amongst staff and the corporation with virtually zero-budget toward branding.
- Over the last five years it has become the driving force behind a cultural shift in a collaborative environment that is spurring innovation, global collaboration and solutions that solve client's problems.
- It has created social media "rock stars" within the company who are becoming recognized leaders for their blog writings as the go-to opinion leaders who people respect and follow for their thoughtful ideas and inspiration.

#### **IBM has created a similar platform called Beehive:**

- Beehive is an internal social networking site that gives IBMers a "rich connection to the people they work with" on both a

personal and a professional level.

- The Beehive team created the site to help IBM employees meet the challenge of building the relationships vital to working in large, distributed enterprises today.
- The team is also exploring if Beehive can help IBMers discover people with common interests or the right skills for a project, whether learning more about someone -- either personally or professionally -- facilitates making contact, and to what extent it entices people to learn about ongoing projects and activities beyond their immediate team.

The past few years have proven social media is no longer an Internet phenomena but rather something that is here to stay that drives innovation, collaboration and unleashes human potential.

#### Google uses social media tools as a reporting mechanism:

- The company's engineers use blogs and wikis as a way to report work progress.
- Managers stay abreast of their progress and provide direction by using tools that make it easy to mine data on workflows.
- Engineers are better able to coordinate work with one another and can request back up help when needed.

#### Pixar has a video wiki for animation collaboration:

- The company started with text based—then moved to video based wikis to share information about films in production and to document meeting notes.
- Once the system was installed, critique led to increased efficiency and faster film development.

#### Conclusion

Social media advances are getting so much attention that McKinsey recently conducted a analysis and assessment of what major corporations were doing and what some of the impediments and obstacles were that were preventing more wide scale participation in social networking technologies. The result of their analysis

was reported in the February 2009 issue of McKinsey Quarterly.

In summary there are six initiatives/ideas that are promulgating effective use of social media. McKinsey sees it as a major development within corporate cultures with potentially higher success factors in comparison to the CRM and ERP initiatives of the late 90s. It is not just a timely phenomenon that will likely pass with time, but rather a rules changing paradigm shift that will dramatically change how companies will compete and conduct business. Some of the items they suggest are as follows;

1. The transformation to a bottom up culture needs help from the top. Social media channels need senior leaders using it as an example to gain credibility and traction. Senior executives need to become role models and lead through informal channels for it to catch on across the board.
2. The best uses come from users-but they require help to scale. Applications that drive the most value through participatory technologies often aren't those that management expects. When management chooses the wrong uses, organizations often don't regroup by switching to applications that might be successful.
3. What's in the workflow is what get's used. Adopt social media as part of the daily work routine—not just something extra on the side.
4. Appeal to the participants egos and needs—not just their wallets. Recognize and reward employees' positive participation in social media experiments publicly. Like EMC, shower contributors with public praise, make them "Rock Stars" and reward their enthusiasm, acknowledging the quality and usefulness of contributions.
5. The right solution comes from the right participants. Getting the right audience to participate is critical to the quality the social media channel. Select users who will help drive a self-sustaining effort (often enthusiastic early technology adopters who have rich personal networks and will thus share knowledge and exchange ideas). And be committed to create collective value.
6. Balance the top down and self management of risk. A common reason

for failed participation is discomfort with it, or even fear. In some cases, the lack of management control over the self-organizing nature and power of dissent is the issue. In others, it's the potential repercussions of content—through blogs, social networks, and other venues—that is detrimental to the company. Make sure the content and participants in any social media channel are managed and expectations are set so there is a balance. Include all stakeholders in the discussions to resolve potential issues before they arise.

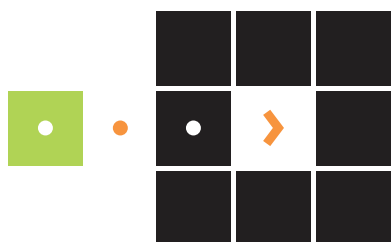
As all the current thinking suggests, there are major employee mind set adjustments and change management communications required with implementing an effective social media strategy inside your company. Change management communications were also required during initiation and launch of reengineering and process redesign in the mid 90's and CRM systems after the millennium. If you don't motivate your people to embrace the new technological change by educating them, by demonstrating how the change is relevant to their lives/jobs, the acceptance/adoption of new habits will never occur and your firm will fall behind on this new technological social media movement.

We have put together a timely PowerPoint tutorial explaining the trends with advice on how to get started. If you would like a copy let us know. Also at Inward, we are curious how social media is changing the rules of engagement, so if you have stories from your own experiences and ideas to share with us please go to our blog and let us know by commenting on our community page.

So jump into this new social media world. You can decide to dip your toe into it or your whole body. Let us help show you the way. We have the skills, strategic relationships with some of the best social media designers, strategists and technologists around and the change management communications capabilities to insure your success.



Allan Steinmetz is the CEO and founder of Inward Strategic Consulting, an internal/external branding, change management communications, team alignment and market research consulting firm.



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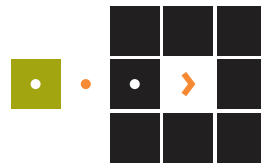


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