

Good Old Fashioned Online Brands

Social values redolent of the '50s, '60s, and even '70s are quietly being readopted by brands. These values are becoming more strongly expressed in the communications of brands plugged into the trend.

Why is this happening? How can you leverage this? Why is simple. As the global community endures crisis after crisis -- the SARS epidemic, an ever-present threat of political instability, shadows of war, and continual damage to already fragile economies -- humans long for stability. We're united in a need for something we can trust, rely on, and think about with joy.

Aside from the macro situation of global instability, there's the micro situation of individual uncertainty. Close to 50 percent of marriages end in divorce. The strong family unit celebrated in earlier decades' wholesome sitcoms and movies seems an anachronism. Nostalgia encourages parents and kids alike to think about the past in romantic terms. The past is an icon of stability.

How does this affect your Web site? Well, forget about

innovative, flash graphics harkening to 2010. Personally, I'm convinced most consumers are repelled rather than attracted to a sci-fi, futuristic approach. Go the opposite direction. Contribute stability to your customers' lives by evoking the past in your communications.

If your brand is an old, familiar favourite, dig out some promotional material from the archives. Look at those old graphics and catchphrases and try to integrate them in current communications.

I'm not saying you should ignore the contemporary realities that have guided your communications. But I'm definitely suggesting you exploit elements from your brand's past that reflect the values of stable, prosperous times. The power of association is useful. Classic branding, uncomplicated by contemporary slickness, might draw customers into a warmer relationship with your brand. Reference to past decades' branding will create the aura of a brand that's been around for ages and will - take note - stay around for ages.

In inconstant times, consumers desperately want security. Trust and stability are attributes of a secure environment. Consumers are hardly in the mood for another dot-com bubble company, Enron scandal, Swissair debacle, or Arthur Andersen controversy. Consumers now favour companies that reflect stability and honest endeavour. The criteria for gauging trustworthiness are based on individual gut feeling and instinct.

If you're lucky enough to be caretaker of a brand that's been around for a long time, leverage the fact. If you're promoting a new brand, establish a style that appeals to consumers' sense the past. Use nostalgia to create "classic" or traditional appeal. Manufacture the feeling the brand has been around forever. I'm not suggesting you lie; but I am encouraging you to note and be sensitive to social circumstances and transmit a sense of stability, reliability, and longevity to your brand.



Encourage the sense your brand doesn't intend to be a flash on the horizon.

Now, more than ever, make consumers trust your brand will be around tomorrow. If possible, let your brand speak for itself, using signals from its own past. It may sound old-fashioned, but old is new again.

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