Guide: Brand Image Assessments

This document contains:

Part 1: **Overview**

Part 2: **Assessing Your Current Brand Image (Questions)**

Part 3: **Analyzing Results**

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Guide: Brand Image Assessments

Part 1: Overview

To fully assess your company's current brand image, it is necessary to investigate perceptions with employees and customers. The purpose of the employee brand image assessment is to uncover the current brand image of your company as it stands in the minds of employees. This will allow you to begin understanding the beliefs and behaviors that influence the work culture and customer experience.

The purpose of the customer brand image assessment is to uncover the current brand image of your company as it stands in the minds of customers. This will allow you to begin understanding the perceptions that influence ongoing loyalty, as well as new sales.

Conducting both an employee and customer brand image assessment will also afford you the opportunity to uncover gaps that may exist between what employees *think* customers are experiencing and what customers are *actually* experiencing. This lets you see any areas your company needs to focus on in order to deliver a consistent, positive experience for customers and for employees.

Following these guidelines to conduct employee and customer brand image assessments:

1. Create overlap in some of the questions in order to determine any gaps that may exist.

2. Ask the same type of question several different ways to check for consistency in responses.

3. The employee assessment **must** be confidential in order to ensure accurate feedback; however, you can give customers the option of attribution, which would allow you to seek testimonials and positive quotes from customers.

4. The employee assessment should have 15 to 18 questions to provide a snapshot of your company's perceived brand image in the minds of employees. It is most efficient to use an online survey tool to track responses and conduct the assessment (e.g., www.surveymonkey.com).

5. The customer assessment should have 10 to 12 questions and can be face-to-face or telephone-based interviews.

Focus on these primary areas when asking questions and analyzing responses:

1. **Attributes and associations:** Uncover themes based on descriptions by respondents to describe the organization, its people, and products and/or services.

2. **Competitive strengths:** Gain perspective on meaningful benefits delivered to customers, points of difference, and points of parity when compared to competitive offerings.

3. **Concerns and weaknesses:** Raise awareness of concerns that have an impact on product/service delivery, employee morale and productivity, customer loyalty, and new sales.

4. **Work culture:** Gain feedback on what it is like to work for your company based on the behaviors employees demonstrate and the performance standards they are asked to meet. The customer analysis questions should focus on the experience of doing business with your company as a result of employee behaviors and operational processes.

If necessary, probe on secondary areas including:

5. **Vision for the future:** Understand if employees are aligned on future company goals and aspirations. Uncover discrepancies in the beliefs about future growth, while gaining perspective on the level of passion/emotional connection to the company among employees.

6. **Target audience insights:** Gather ideas from specific target segments or customers and uncover potential hidden opportunities for growth.

Guide: Brand Image Assessments

Part 2: Assessing Your Current Brand Image (Questions)

Below is a list of potential questions that can be used to assess employee and customer perceptions. Pick two to four questions from each section. Choose questions that you believe will provide the most valuable insights about your company.

Note: Insert your company name in the field labeled [COMPANY]. Employee-specific questions are in Red; customer-specific questions are in Blue.

Attributes and associations

1. When you think of [COMPANY], what is the first word that comes to your mind?
2. How might your opinion about [COMPANY] differ from other employees?
3. If you were to describe [COMPANY] to someone who doesn't know anything about the company, what would you say?
4. How might [COMPANY] be perceived differently by [CUSTOMER TYPE A] compared with [CUSTOMER TYPE B]?
5. Using only two or three words, capture the essence of [COMPANY].
6. What do you often hear other employees say about [COMPANY]?
   (Please capture your thoughts, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.)
7. Based on the experience customers have with [COMPANY], what do you think is **one word** customers would think of when describing the company?
8. What is **one word** that comes to mind when you think of [COMPANY]?

Competitive strengths

Meaningful benefits

9. What are the three main reasons why you like to do business with [COMPANY]?
10. What do you think are the three main reasons why customers like doing business with [COMPANY]?
11. If [COMPANY]'s employees were to receive an award from customers, what would it recognize?
12. What makes customers rave about [COMPANY]?
13. If you were to give [COMPANY]'s employees an award, what benefit would it recognize?

Points of difference and/or points of parity

14. What makes [COMPANY] unique or different compared to other companies in the industry?
   (Please capture your thoughts, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.)
15. Since you have been a customer of [COMPANY], was there anything [COMPANY] did (or does) that was more than you expected?
16. If [COMPANY] ceased to exist, what would you miss most and why?

17. What do others in the industry do that [COMPANY] would never do?

18. What does [COMPANY] do that others in the industry would never do?

19. If customers no longer had access to [COMPANY], what do you think they would miss most?

20. Using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 equals Highly Unlikely, 5 equals Neutral, and 10 equals Highly Likely, how likely is it that you would recommend [COMPANY] to a friend or colleague?

Concerns and weaknesses

21. What is the biggest concern you have about [COMPANY]?

22. What is the biggest concern you think customers have about [COMPANY]?

23. Using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 equals Very Poor, 5 equals Neutral, and 10 equals Outstanding, how do you think customers would rate their experience working with [COMPANY]? Why do you think they would give that rating?

24. Using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 equals Very Poor, 5 equals Neutral, and 10 equals Outstanding, how would you rate your experience working with [COMPANY]? Why did you give that rating?

25. If you could change one thing about [COMPANY], what would it be and what is the main reason that one thing needs to be changed?

26. What are the three most frequent complaints you hear about [COMPANY] from employees? *(Please capture your thoughts, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.)*

27. What are the three most frequent complaints you hear about [COMPANY] from customers?

Work culture

28. Using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 equals Very Poor, 5 equals Neutral, and 10 equals Outstanding, how would you rate [COMPANY] as a place to work? Why did you give that rating?

29. What behaviors do employees demonstrate consistently for customers that help create a loyal relationship with them?

30. If you were to describe [COMPANY] as an animal, what animal would you choose and why?

31. True or False: Employees feel good about work for [COMPANY] and are motivated and inspired to do great work?

32. True or False: [COMPANY] has a performance-based work culture that recognizes good performance and holds employees accountable for results?

33. True or False: Employees clearly understand their role within the company and the impact they have on helping the organization achieve business goals and objectives?

34. True or False: Employees understand [COMPANY]'s "vision for success" (the big picture), and trust leadership to get the company there?

Vision for the future

35. What is your vision or dream for [COMPANY]? What would you like it to become well into the future?

Target audience insights

36. Who is not using [COMPANY]'s products and services that you wish would use the most?

37. Describe the ideal [COMPANY] customer. *(Please describe the ideal customer's personality and key attributes.)*

Guide: Brand Image Assessments

Part 3: **Analyzing Results**

Once you have collected and consolidated all the data from the employee and customer brand image assessments, you can explore the results to gain a more thorough understanding of how customers and employees currently perceive your brand. Use the following notes, thought-provoking questions, and explanations as stimulus to get you started in analyzing responses. While the purpose of these notes is to assist you in gathering and exploring insights, it is highly recommended that you engage the services of a skilled researcher to effectively analyze all input.

Attributes and associations

1. Look for functional responses versus emotional responses. There is potential for some of these responses to detail benefits.

   - Functional response: Based on service or product usage, these are difficult to differentiate with and easily copied by competitors.

   - Emotional response: Based on the experience of working with the company, these evoke feelings of confidence and trust.

   - A perfect response would combine a functional description, along with a client benefit and a strong emotional component.

2. Make note of any associations with respect to your company's brand as a person, an organization, a product/service, or as a heritage/pedigree.

   - Note words and concepts mentioned that could provide a platform and opportunity for your company to differentiate itself.

3. How much diversity appears in the responses?

   - Look for strong themes in identical or similar responses.

   - Note the number of unique responses to demonstrate "strength in numbers."

   - Categorize any distinct differences in responses.

4. Watch for responses that indicate things that would be considered price-to-entry in your industry.[1]

5. How well do employees know the experiences your company delivers?

   - You can confirm positive or negative experiences customers and/or employees might have had.

   - You can find out what experiences employees think customers want that are not currently being delivered.

6. Do employees understand who you are, what you do, and why it matters?

   - Look for a shared vision among employees in regards to your company's values, beliefs, and benefits delivered.

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[1] Price-to-entry = anything that a company needs to have in order to successfully compete in its industry.

- It is critical that employees become educated on (and know the importance of) how to describe your company in a way that is relevant to customers and key stakeholders. If it is not defined for employees, they will naturally describe your company in a way they are most comfortable with instead of in a way that benefits the company and is relevant to the audience they are talking to.

Competitive strengths

7. Look for consensus (or lack thereof) on core benefits. You can see how well employees actually understand target customers and the benefits/values customers are seeking.

8. How well are your employees able to articulate the things that make your company different from the competition; the key benefits and/or specific values delivered to customers?

   - Are they communicated in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the specific audience?

   - Are the responses experiential? Do the benefits stated lead to positive experiences for customers?

      > How can your company make the delivery of the benefits more experiential? How will your company control the experience to ensure the consistent execution and delivery of these benefits?

9. How inclined are your employees to market your company?

   - Look for function, emotional, self-expressive, and aspirational benefits; benefits beyond low price.

10. Is there consistency in responses?

    - The diversity of responses may have an impact on the consistency in communications to target customers.

    - Note the number of different types of benefits communicated and determine which are the most meaningful with respect to the desired outcomes of specific target audiences.

11. How well can employees communicate the difference between your offerings and those of your competition?

    - How knowledgeable are your employees about the competition?

    - If employees don't know anything about the competition, how can they know what makes your company unique in comparison?

12. Look for responses containing insight into a potential competitive advantage; comments indicating a point of difference your company can deliver through its people, products, and/or services.

    - Defining these points of difference with behaviors and experiences will build a strong differentiation platform for your company. It is easy for the competition to copy the functional aspects and messages of your company, but it is close to impossible for them to copy your people and processes.

13. Watch out for points of parity that employees falsely believe are unique to your company.

14. Keep on the lookout for anything employees may be missing that should be important considering your industry and competitive environment.

Concerns and weaknesses

15. Look for consistency in responses with respect to concerns employees and customers have about the company.

- Categorize concerns as the most important to address with the brand strategy and those to be fixed or optimally worked around.

    > Try to segment responses into three categories: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

- Concerns shared by employees are very often related to the specific environment/role they operate in within the company. When asked this question, employees in companies with strong brands and cultures typically respond with concerns about the entire organization rather than a personal concern about their own situation. This is a result of the strong emotional connection they have to their company. Once a brand strategy is in place, it will play a critical role in helping alleviate and mitigate some employees' personal concerns because organizational clarity will be reached.

16. Make note of any indication of the need to talk further with customers to better understand their concerns.

17. Do employees know what desired outcomes your target audiences are looking to achieve?

18. Do employees understand the company's high-level strategy and growth objectives?

Work culture

19. Things to note:

    - Strong emotional connections between employees and the company.

    - Opinions that reinforce concerns mentioned.

    - Strengths and weaknesses of the current work culture.

20. How capable are your employees at generating awareness and interest?

21. These questions will help you to better understand the beliefs employees hold, which have an impact on their attitude and behaviors.

22. Can employees describe behaviors that have a direct impact on the delivery of the benefits customers are seeking?

    - Do employees understand the desired outcomes of customers?

    - Do employees understand what a behavior is as it relates to their job, as opposed to simply restating a benefit?

    - Are the behaviors described ones that deliver meaningful benefits, thus leading to positive experiences for customers?

23. Do your employees know what good work looks like?

24. Do your employees feel they are recognized and appreciated for doing good work?

25. Are there signs of accountability being enforced and appreciated?

    - Does your company lack discipline in HR practices?

Since work culture can be complex and lead to diverse sets of values and behaviors throughout the company, the development of a brand strategy plays a critical role in the future development and improvement of the culture. The company brand can be used to guide interactions among employees and leadership and serve as the link to sustaining the work culture.

Vision for the future

1. Do employees describe functional enhancements to the business rather than emotional and aspirational feelings about the company?

2. Are employees excited and passionate about the future?

3. Look for strategic thoughts about where the business could or should be heading.

4. Make note of any concerns mentioned and any discrepancies in beliefs about future growth.

5. Are there any specific themes that are dependant on other processes? (For example, "providing world-class service" would be dependent on training and a motivated, inspired workforce.)

Target audience insights

1. Do your employees understand who your target audiences are?

2. Look for hidden or undiscovered potential opportunities.

3. Do your employees share a vision or passion for growth opportunities within certain audience segments?

Once you have analyzed the results of your employee and customer brand image assessments you can start to build a framework for better understanding your most important customers and the desired outcomes they want to realize when doing business with your company. Visit www.brandintegrity.com/truth3 for a template for organizing and prioritizing your customers' desired outcomes.

Don't hesitate to contact our highly skilled team to discuss and explore how Brand Integrity can help you administer an assessment and analyze and apply results in your company. Send an email to info@brandintegrity.com or call us at 585.442.5404 for more information.