

**Brand Primer**

# How to Create Internal Brand Alignment

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## Do not underestimate the value of internal marketing and brand building.

In a world where human connections are precious, your employees can convey your brand with more personality, depth and nuance than any other medium. **When employees are aligned around the brand, they are better equipped to communicate what your organization stands for and what it means for customers.** In the best cases, they become ambassadors of the brand. Employees who value the brand also find more meaning in their work and ultimately feel more professionally fulfilled. In fact, studies show—and our own experience confirms—that companies committed to internal brand education enjoy a number of morale-related benefits, from more effective recruiting to higher employee retention.

With such a compelling upside to internal brand development, savvy companies are putting more mindshare and resources into employee-focused marketing and education. To maximize the success of your company's inward efforts, we recommend the following critical steps:

### **Prepare the way for the initiative**

Begin by laying a strategic foundation for your brand alignment activities and identifying the people and resources needed to achieve your organization's communications goals. Once a plan is in place and the major players are on board, start to publicize the upcoming initiative, both to underscore its importance and set employee expectations. As part of this process, educate employees on the fundamentals of brand strategy, so they'll have a framework for understanding the upcoming initiative and its role in your company's business.

### **Generate high-level commitment**

Secure senior management's active endorsement of the new initiative—ideally, by introducing the effort to staff and evangelizing it on an ongoing basis. Without support from senior management, employees may see your brand-building initiative as a marketing exercise, not the significant company initiative it is. Similarly, hold all internal brand communication to the same high standard as your company's external marketing, and use everyday language, not "marketing shorthand," to communicate with employees. Like potential customers, employees tend to be a skeptical audience and will respond most positively if they see internal brand building as an organizational priority.

### **Use multiple channels to reach employees**

In many cases, employee communication is limited to a semi-annual sales meeting or an in-house newsletter. To ensure your brand alignment gains traction internally, take advantage of every possible touch-point with employees: build brand messaging into your company's HR function, communicate your brand on organization-wide wall posters, add a brand education section to your company's intranet. Whenever possible, integrate examples of language and activities that are on- and off-brand. Employees will benefit from this practical understanding—they will learn how to both communicate and live the brand.

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### **Put infrastructure in place to support the initiative**

For your brand initiative to be successful, your organization needs the staff and resources in place to sustain your brand alignment activities. Start by putting together a cross-functional team—drawn from different levels of the company—to participate in the initiative and serve as “brand mentors.”

**From an operational standpoint, make sure you have the budget and communication tools in place to support regular brand communication and education.** For example, channels like a company newsletter, quarterly meetings and an employee intranet will be integral in reinforcing your brand-building activities.