



An Easy Internal 30-Minute Brand Checkup

How do you know for sure that your employees understand your brand and how you differ from your competitors? And how can you find out if your employees *really* understand your business? The answer is simple: Ask them.

First thing tomorrow morning, send the email below to thirty random people throughout your company. Be sure to include people from your executive team as well as those in senior management, sales, marketing, operations, human resources, customer service and production.

Cut and paste the following into your email:

Subject Line: An Important Request

Hello (first name):

As the (insert your title) and a leader of _____, I want to ensure that everyone at (insert the name of your company) understands our brand, our vision and our competitive advantages in the markets we serve. To achieve this goal, I must ask all of you to answer the questions below so that I may understand how each of you perceives the (insert the name of your company) brand and our competitive positioning. Please answer the following questions before the end of today, print out your answers, seal them in an envelope and place them in the box located in our break room. And one more thing – do not include your name. I want each of you to be open and candid with your responses, so I'm keeping this anonymous.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

1. What is unique about our company?
2. What is our company's vision?
3. What are our primary strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats?
4. If you were a prospective customer, would you or would you not do business with us? Why?

Why the time limit? If employees cannot provide answers to these basic, fundamental questions within one business day, it reveals one or more issues:

- Your employees were never properly indoctrinated in the characteristics of your brand.
- Your brand was never defined, in which case #1 wasn't even possible.
- If those employees who didn't respond were, in fact, indoctrinated, it tells you that there isn't a culture in place to promote and support your brand — and hence, that they have forgotten what your brand stands for.

When you collect and review the answers, separate the responses into groups to get an idea of how many different perceptions there are of your brand in each category. With any luck, you won't have more than a couple groups. Ideally, you should have only one. If you have three or more, there's some work to be done. After all, as you know, if you want to make progress on anything that matters, everyone must be on the same page. Your goal as the chief brand officer is to ensure that everyone in your employ understands your brand, believes in your brand, lives your brand and delivers your brand expectations. This is especially important for those who are in sales and out in the field talking to your customers.

Brands *must* be built from within, and a successful brand must be endorsed from the very top echelons of an organization. If the owner, president or CEO doesn't define and promote the brand with confidence and enthusiasm, all he or she has is a group of employees who mundanely go through the motions as identified in their job descriptions without a real sense of motivation or purpose. Your brand will never achieve greatness that way.