

Losing talent, losing business by loose branding bonds

by Thomas Gad

Unclear strategies, a diffuse corporate brand and a poor alignment between the corporate brand and the "personal brands" of individual employees can undermine all the loyalty felt for a company. It may create a sense of independence that could cause severe financial damage to any enterprise. If you on the contrary have a strong brand well integrated with the personal brands of your people, they are less inclined to leave the organisation and take business with them elsewhere.

Typically, today's large professional B2B organisations are encouraging self-management. This is absolutely necessary since line managers need to be empowered and independent in order to be able to adapt to demanding clients. The B2B sales teams within, for example, a large telecom operator are addressing issues on a high management level in the client organisation, meeting client top management and taking part in client corporate strategies. In their own organisation they usually feel very distant from their own top management and their strategies, which are often abstract and badly communicated. The outcome of this situation is a growing alienation from the brand of one's own company and an increasing identification with the client's. This of course results in an obvious question: what is the value of being a part of one's company? The B2B team members rightly feel total ownership of their customers.

There are two good ways for a company to avoid this. One is to build such a strong brand bond with the clients that a relationship outside that brand is perceived as a dramatic loss in reliability and prestige. The other possibility is to tie the sales team members strongly to the corporate brand by integrating the brand of the individual (the personal brand) with that of the company.

In their book "Managing Brand Me" (Pearson, Momentum, 2002) Thomas Gad and Anette Rosencreutz describe a method of creating an individual brand that can be easily synchronised with the corporate one using the same basic branding criteria, thus ensuring that the brand bond is playing harmoniously between company and individuals. This doesn't interfere with the actual independence needed to ensure integration with clients.

The authors claim that an increased consciousness of these matters among individual employees greatly improves the alignment and the efficiency of the organisation.

It also secures the motivation and the loyalty of the employees to the company.

In addition to the personal branding of individuals, Gad/Rosencreutz have created a team branding tool which is also transparent in terms of both individual branding and the corporate.

Thomas is founder of *Brandflight* (www.brandflight.com) with offices in Stockholm and London. His clients include companies like BrainHeart Capital, Stockholm City Council, Kista Science City, Carnegie Mellon University - Software Engineering Institute, Cerealia, Swedish Farmers Association and Johnson & Johnson - Ethicon.

Gad has developed a unique 4-dimensional method of creating, transforming, and maintaining brands and authored the book *4-D Branding*, with foreword by Sir Richard Branson (*Financial Times/ Prentice Hall, London 2001*). He has also co-authored *Managing Brand Me – how to build your personal brand* (Pearson-Momentum, London 2002).