

Concurrent Session – A4 “Outbehave” Your Competition

A firm’s success begins with their employees. Is your brand strategy invisible to your employees? Do your employees know how to deliver on your company’s brand to potential clients? Outlining and building behaviors employees will adopt and use to deliver improved profitability, loyalty and sales is the goal of any firm, however most do not successfully encourage their people to relay their brand strategy and promote services that set their firm apart from others. Typically, it is the firm that is responsible for the lack of defining their brand and educating their own employees on how to deliver that brand to potential leads.

Many firms fall into the trap of rationalizing the importance of employee engagement yet do nothing to support or reinforce the initiative. This ultimately leads to a firm-wide apathetic mind set, while employees become desensitized to the promises made by their employers. Understanding how to get your firm to keep the promises it makes is the first step. Brand discipline and initiative building are key goals to increasing employee performance quality.

Brand discipline starts with an “alignment” through the creation of a strategic marketing plan that is shared with the entire firm. This plan must provide a mission statement and brand promise that is a reflection of the firm’s business strategy. A stronger plan focuses on experiences (not logos and taglines) taking what you are saying to the marketplace and making the invisible (i.e. brand concepts, beliefs and benefits and attitudes) visible (i.e. behaviors). Each employee must then know how to take action on each initiative in a consistent, firm-wide effort. A formula for employee buy-in success is created and typically looks like this: UNDERSTANDING x COMMITMENT x TAKING ACTION. This is the “blueprint” for firm teams. Building behaviors based on your brand concepts will ultimately create proprietary behaviors. You will want to document, trend and measure actions.

Brand image assessment also needs to take place to determine why clients want to do business with you. Typically, these reasons include personal relationships, personal service and a more attentive/local based firm. It is important to ask yourself “What would clients miss most if we closed?” Once the firm assessment is compiled, examination of what you want to articulate for the future begins.

Valuable tools for holding your employees accountable for the brand strategy is to assess which employees are the greatest assets to the company. Remember, not all employees are good employees. A good employee should consistently build the “employer’s brand.” “The employer brand consists of clearly defined expectations that your company wants to be known for as an employer based on the experiences and opportunities provided to employees.” If your company’s leaders and employees cannot dedicate their beliefs to the company brand, then a cohesive and strong brand identity is not possible, therefore, your employees will not be the greatest company assets.