

brand cascading

*how to leverage your
greatest asset*

six degrees

white paper 03

CASCADING YOUR BRAND

Most people think a brand is created through marketing and advertising and point to the interesting ads, impactful messages and cool designs.

But successful branding goes much deeper than what customers see and hear in external communications. Think of an iceberg: the majority of its bulk is hidden under the water. Marketing and advertising are like the part of the iceberg you see. They set the expectations for the brand. But the experience a customer has with a given brand extends far beyond what marketing and advertising promise. The brand experience is based on how the organization delivers on the promise.

To get the most leverage out of your brand, employees and partners need to have an understanding of the brand promise...and be empowered to deliver that promise in their areas of responsibility.

You often hear the refrain, “our employees are our greatest asset”. Unfortunately, we rarely enlighten our employees on what our brand really stands for and then fail to engage them in identifying and creating behaviors and actions that bring the brand to life in their respective functional areas.

Why bother to spend the resources on this?

Simple: it pays. Studies have shown that stocks of “brand leaders”--that is, companies with both high brand awareness and high ratings on alignment of employees with the brand promise--return over 300% more than the S&P500 and nearly twice as much as companies that just have high brand awareness.

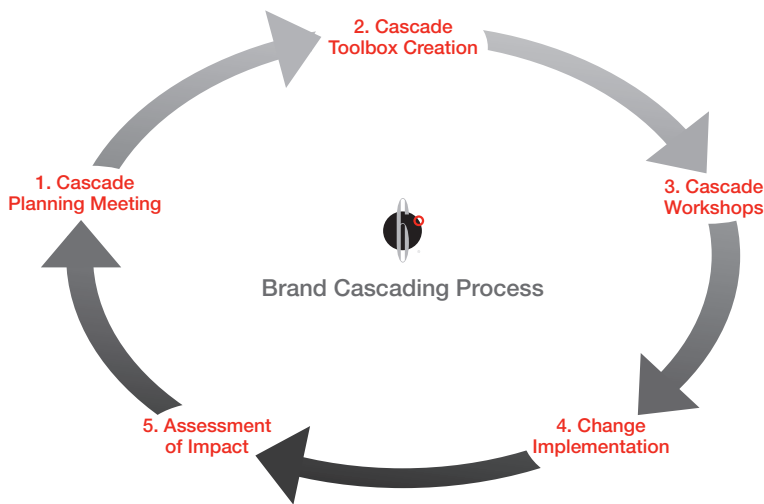
So, how do you do it?

How do you cascade the brand throughout your organization, so that the expectations set by the brand promise are experienced by everyone who interacts with the brand?

We have found the following process to be effective across different brands and organizations:

Step 1: Brand Focus Workshop. This is where the optimal 3-4 perceptions you want your brand to stand for in the market place are nailed down by leaders in the organization. The workshop is designed to create consensus around a set of perceptions for the brand that are different, credible and relevant. Some brands already have this, in which case this step can be skipped.

Step 2: Cascade Planning Meeting. With the 3-4 desired brand perceptions clearly defined and agreed upon, the next step is to conduct a cascade planning meeting. We recognize every organization is different and what works for one may not work for another. Based on differing brand personalities, markets, organizational structures, cultures, etc, we work with clients to define the optimal approach to structuring the cascading project, the agenda for the workshops, who should attend the workshops and measurement criteria for that particular brand.



Step 3: Cascading Workshops. Based on the size of the organization, we either conduct all workshop sessions, or train others within the organization to conduct the sessions (“train the trainers” approach). These workshops involve a primer on branding, specifics about the brand promise, the perceptions the brand is trying to create and why, as well as the power of engaging all employees in “living” the brand. The workshop also involves structured brainstorming so that employees can identify methods, procedures and behaviors in their specific areas of responsibility that will help the organization deliver on the brand promise and perceptions.

Step 4: Implementation. Following the cascading sessions, we review with management the ideas and proposed actions and changes identified during the cascading sessions. Decisions are then made about which to implement and goals are set for each. Proposed ideas and changes are vetted against what will likely create the most impact relative to cost.

Step 5: Measurement. What gets measured, matters. Working with appropriate team members, we collectively determine how best to measure the impact of the changes and how to hold the organization accountable for the success of these initiatives.

One of the best ways to change behavior is to get people involved. Living the brand promise and perceptions requires that employees have an understanding of how and why this is valuable to their success and that of the organization. Allow them to provide creative ideas, to experiment and to practice actions that support the brand. The result will be an army delivering the brand promise. An army much larger and more effective than the marketing and advertising department.

Your people ARE your most valuable asset--entrust them to do more than their specific job function and deliver your brand promise, too.

six degrees is a sensory branding agency

www.six-degrees.com
info@six-degrees.com
480.627.9850