

# Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding

September 2011



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## **Executive Summary**

This study examines key internal and external challenges in effective branding, the attributes of effective brands, and activities participants have used in effective branding. Considering participants' insights on the relatively low percentage of brands with unaided awareness, there is tremendous opportunity for companies that invest the necessary resources to build their brands.

The study was conducted in July and August, 2011 as an on-line survey. 156 marketing and sales executives from a range of industries, primarily in the United States, participated in the study.

## **Key Findings**

### **Percentage of brands in a given market category that are:**

- Mentioned when given the market category - 30.7%
- Known when mentioned - 37.1%
- Unknown when mentioned - 32.2%

### **The four major trends impacting branding today\***

- Pace of technological change - 46.0%
- Market saturation/Increasing competition - 38.0%
- Changing customer wants/needs/likes - 37.3%
- Cheap/free media creating "noise" in the marketplace - 34.7%

### **The four major reasons for ineffective branding\***

- Weak value proposition - 47.3%
- Lack of differentiation - 44.7%
- Lack of brand/operations alignment - 35.3%
- Poor communication of brand attributes - 32.7%

### **Marketing "buzz" is generally**

- Effective in long-term brand building - 67.1%
- Neither helpful nor harmful in long-term brand building - 31.6%
- Harmful in long-term brand building - 1.3%

\* Total equals more than 100% because participants were given the option of selecting two responses.

**Key attributes of an effective brand**

Trust	Reliability	Quality
Value	Consistency	Differentiation
Clear Value Proposition	Customer/Prospect Oriented	Awareness
Recognition	Delivers on Promise	Simplicity
Memorable	Alignment	Positive
Relevance	Engagement	Solves a Need

**Activities used in effective branding**

Relationship Building	Advertising	On-line/Digital
Media/Public Relations	Internal Brand Alignment	Consistent Activity
Customer Value/Service	Direct Marketing/Sales	Endorsements/Testimonials/ Referrals
Trade Shows/Conferences	Research	Intellectual Capital/Thought Leadership
Social Media	Value Proposition	Segmentation
Word of Mouth	Product Trial/Demo	Email
Product Quality	Multi-Media	

***Key Information about the Participants***

- Average amount of time in sales and/or marketing - 21.8 years
- Assistant Vice President or higher title - 69.6%
- Director or higher title - 87.5%
- Those listing predominant experience as Business-to-Business - 72.2%
- Those listing predominant experience as Corporate - 68.1%
- Those listing Location as the United States - 94.4%

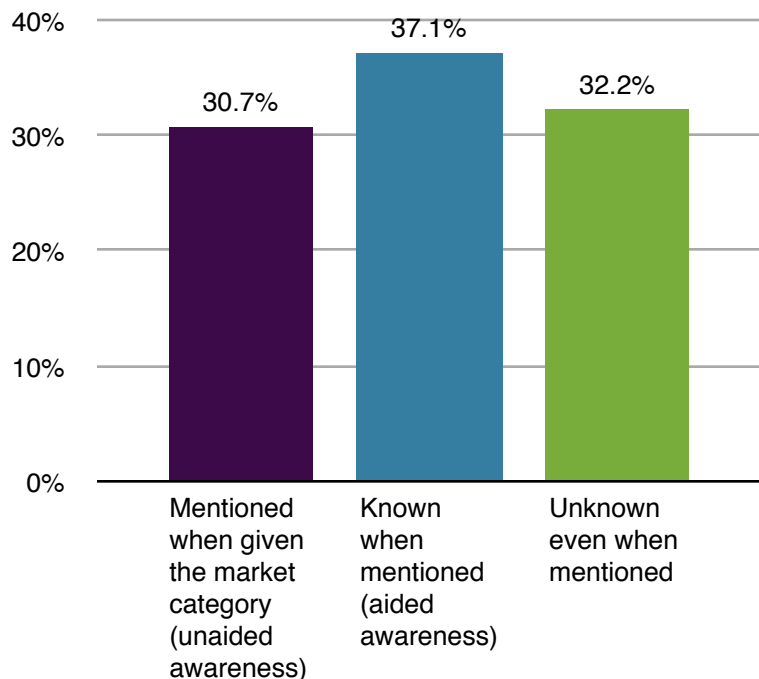
## **About Top-of-Mind Branding**

Top-of-Mind Branding is committed to making our clients' brands top-of-mind in their categories. We do this by helping our clients avoid or overcome Brand Limiters that can negatively impact their brands. For more information, please visit [www.topofmindbranding.com](http://www.topofmindbranding.com).

Information from this study may be used with proper attribution. Suggested attribution is: "In a branding study conducted by Top-of-Mind Branding, a Yardley, PA-based consulting firm."

## Findings

**From your experience, typically what percentage of brands in a given category are? (total should equal 100%)**

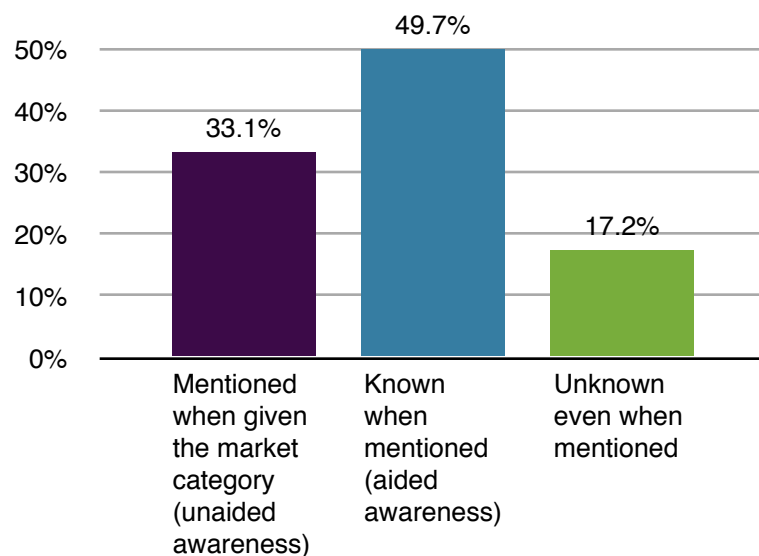


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When asked generally about the percentage of brands in a given category that fall into the unaided awareness, aided awareness and unknown groups, participants felt that less than one-third of brands had unaided awareness. The percentages were slightly higher for the aided awareness and unknown categories.

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**Is/Are the brand(s) you are working on today? (please choose one)**

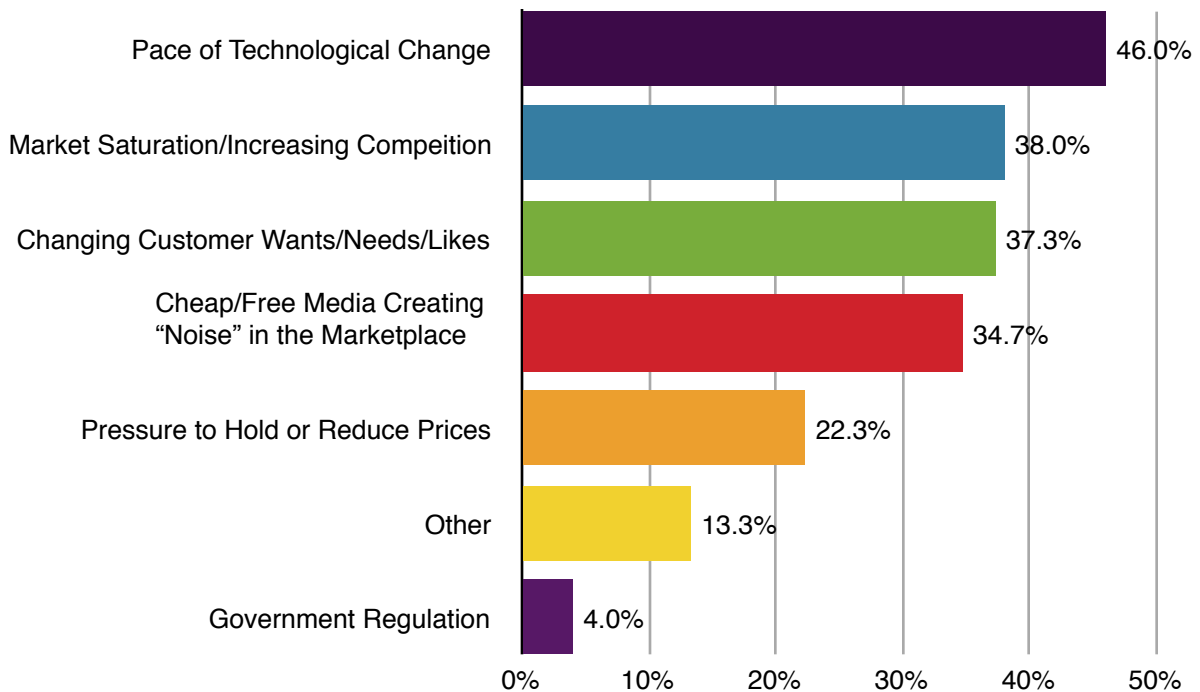


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When asked specifically about the brand or brands they are working on today, participants were more positive, especially in the aided awareness group. However, the number in the unaided awareness group was still only one-third. This presents a tremendous opportunity for those companies that invest in effective branding.

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**What are the most important trends impacting branding today? (please choose up to two trends)**



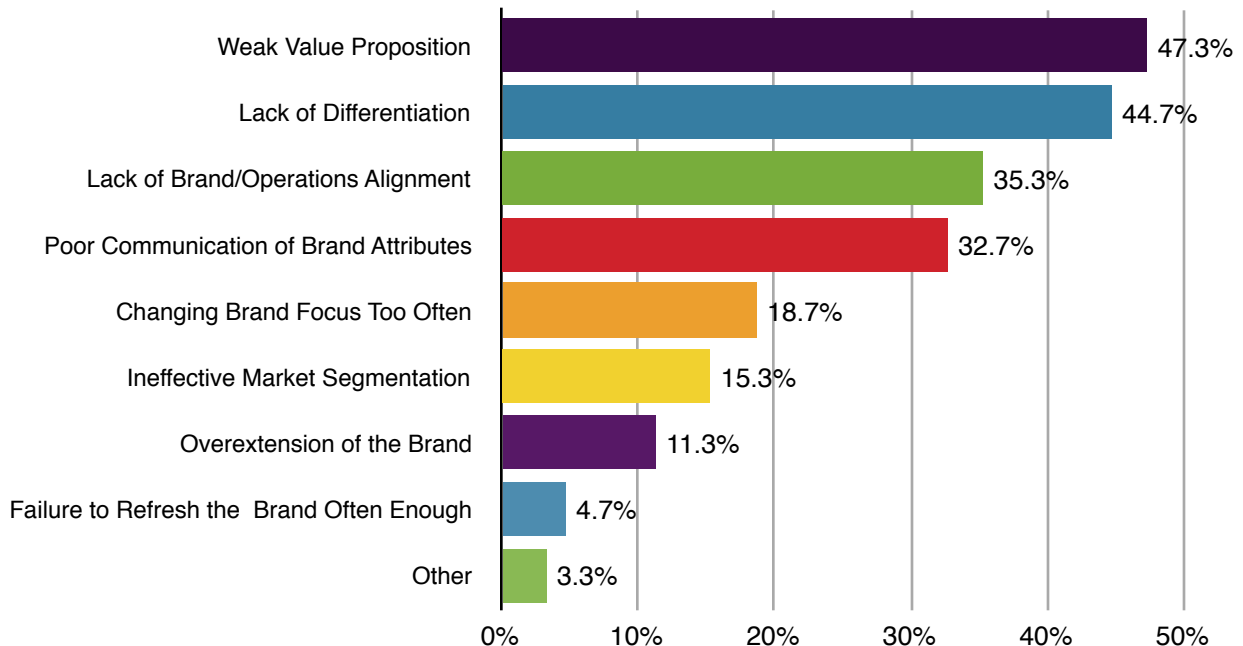
In this question about the external trends impacting branding, the pace of technological change was the trend selected most often. Market saturation/increasing competition, changing customer wants/needs/likes, and cheap/free media creating “noise” in the marketplace were tightly grouped as key trends impacting branding.

Pressure to hold or reduce prices garnered less than half the responses of the leading trend, which is interesting given economic conditions of the past three years. The participants thought that the current economy, where companies are being forced to hold or reduce their prices due to lower demand, is impacting their branding far less than other trends.

There were a number of responses in the “Other” category that could have been included in the pre-set selections. Because the participants felt strongly enough to write in their responses, we left the “Other” category as is and provided a list of these responses in the addendum on page 16.

\* Total equals more than 100% because participants were given the option of selecting two responses.

**In your experience, what are the two major reasons for ineffective branding?  
(please select your top two reasons)**



In this question on the internal factors impacting effective branding, weak value proposition and lack of differentiation were selected as the two most important reasons for ineffective branding. 19.3% of participants selected *both* weak value proposition *and* lack of differentiation and 72.7% selected *either* weak value proposition *or* lack of differentiation. Given that the value proposition and differentiation are the foundation on which branding is built, it is apparent that ineffective branding often happens at the very beginning of the branding process.

Even with an effective value proposition and differentiation, branding can derail when there is poor brand/operations alignment and poor communication of the brand attributes (the third and fourth most selected reasons). These areas are often thought of as “living the brand”. If these do not support the value proposition and differentiation, there is brand breakdown and ineffective branding.

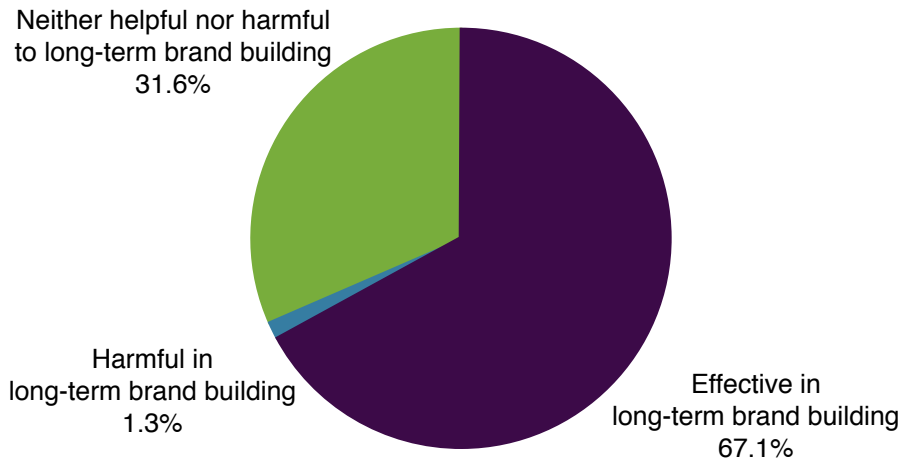
Overextension of the brand was selected by only 11.3% of the participants. This was interesting given the high-profile case studies on brand overextension. These examples may generate more attention because they are less common than other causes of ineffective branding.

In the “Other” category, two of the five write-in responses reflected senior executives’ lack of understanding of branding and lack of support for the brand. Verbatim responses for the “Other” category are on page 17.

\* Total equals more than 100% because participants were given the option of selecting two responses.



**Is marketing “buzz” generally? (please choose one)**



More than two-thirds of participants felt that marketing “buzz” is effective in long-term brand building, with almost another one-third expressing that “buzz” is neither effective nor harmful to long-term brand building. Only 1.3% felt that marketing “buzz” is harmful to long-term brand building.

The key question is whether the “buzz” is supporting the value proposition and differentiation of the brand. If so, it clearly can be effective in brand building. If not, the “buzz” is probably going to have a neutral or negative impact on brand building.

## **What makes a brand effective?**

This open-ended question looks at the attributes of an effective brand. The following attributes were those mentioned most often:

- Trust
- Reliability
- Quality
- Value
- Consistency
- Differentiation
- Clear Value Proposition
- Customer/Prospect Oriented
- Awareness
- Recognition
- Delivers on Promise
- Simplicity
- Memorable
- Alignment
- Positive
- Relevance
- Engagement
- Solves a Need

The responses fall into five broad categories:

- The product or service offered
- Value provided
- Relationship with the customer or client
- Alignment of operations with the brand promise
- Recognition of the brand in the marketplace

The complete list of verbatim responses is in the addendum starting on page 17.

*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
Findings

**What has been the most effective activity you have used in branding? Why?**

This open-ended question looks at the activities that participants felt were most effective in brand building and why they thought these activities were effective. The following activities were mentioned most often:

- Relationship Building
- Advertising
- On-line/Digital
- Media/Public Relations
- Internal Brand Alignment
- Consistent Activity
- Customer Value/Service
- Direct Marketing/Sales
- Endorsements/Testimonials/Referrals
- Trade Shows/Conferences
- Research
- Intellectual Capital/Thought Leadership
- Social Media
- Value Proposition
- Segmentation
- Word of Mouth
- Product Trial/Demo
- Email
- Product Quality
- Multi-Media

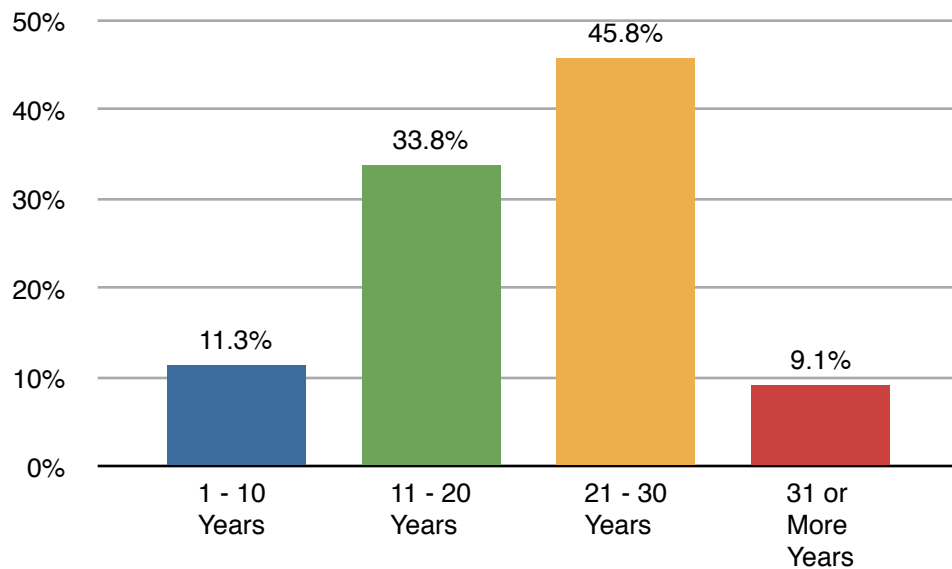
Given the high percentage of participants from business-to-business marketing/sales, it is not surprising to see the high number of mentions of activities focused on direct and one-to-one interaction. These activities are often favored by business-to-business marketers because of the ability to segment the market and cost-effectively target specific activities to those segments.

The complete list of verbatim responses, including why these activities are effective, is in the addendum starting on page 26.

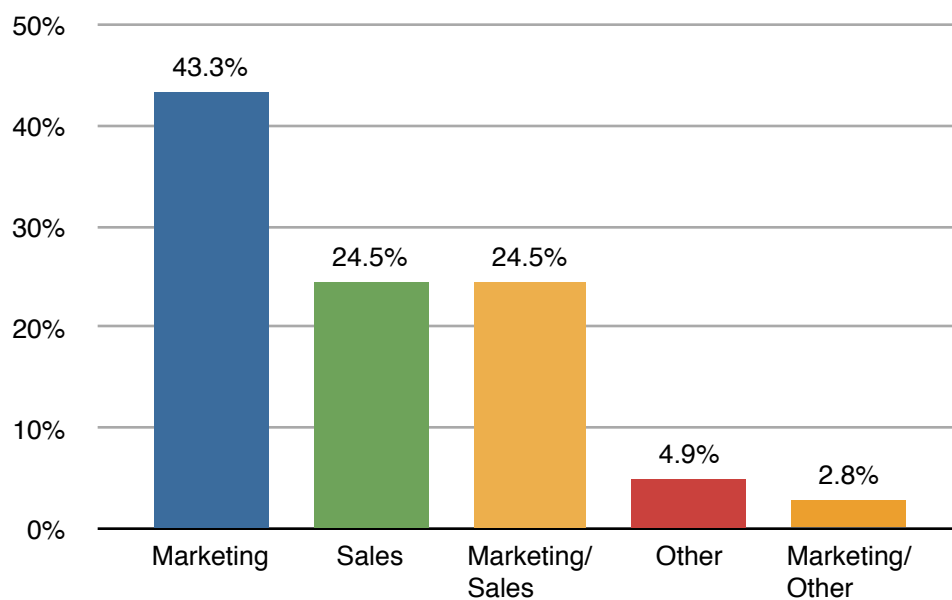
## About the Participants

The following four pages provide demographic information about the survey participants.

### Years Experience in Marketing/Sales Average: 21.8 years

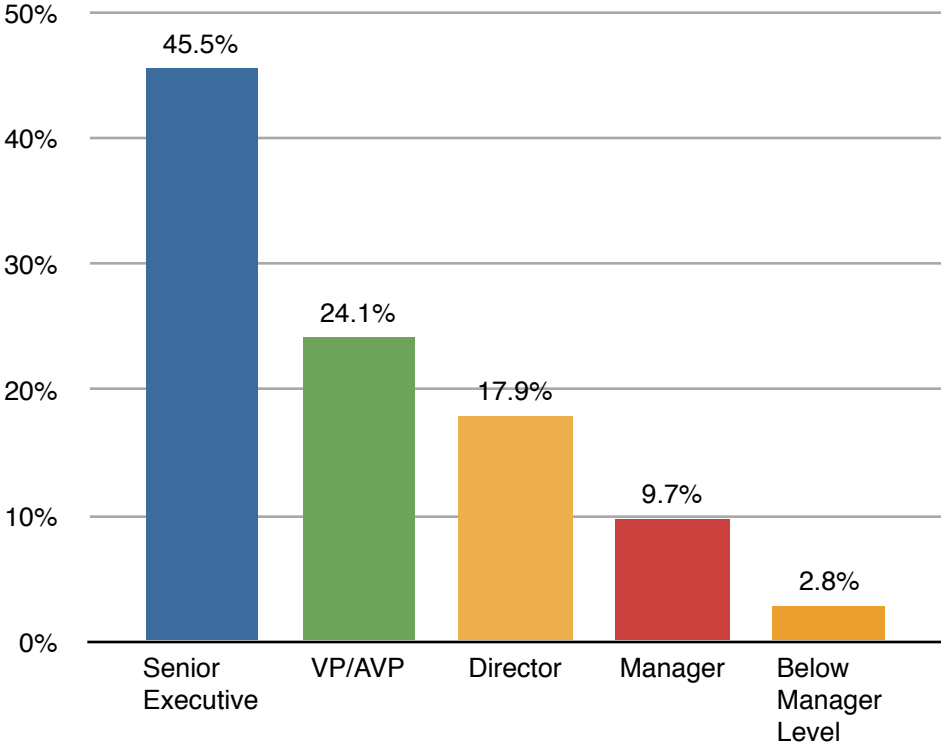


### Primary Focus

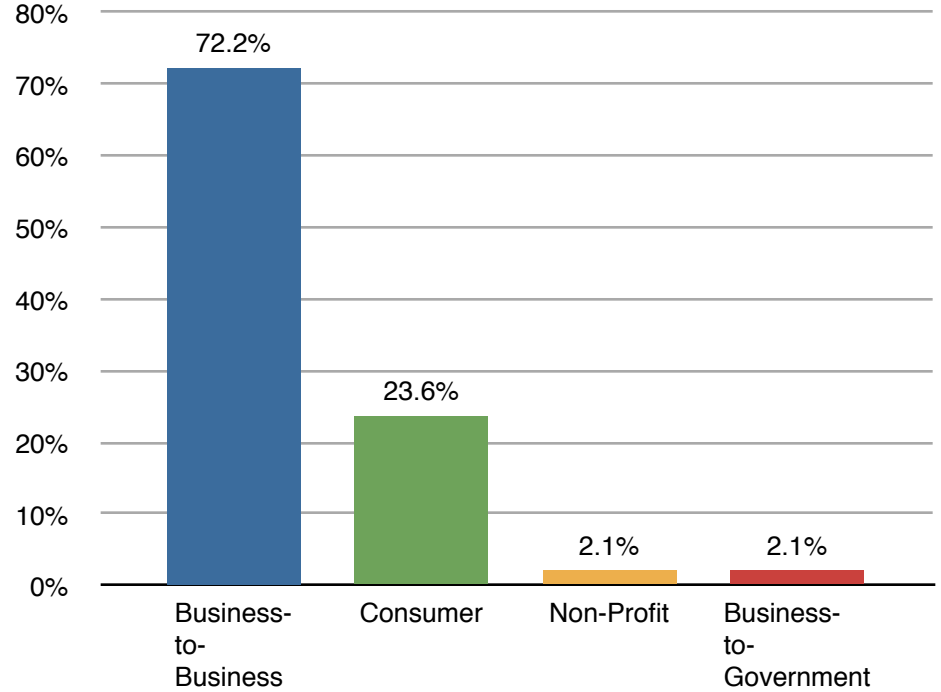


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About the Participants

**Experience Level**

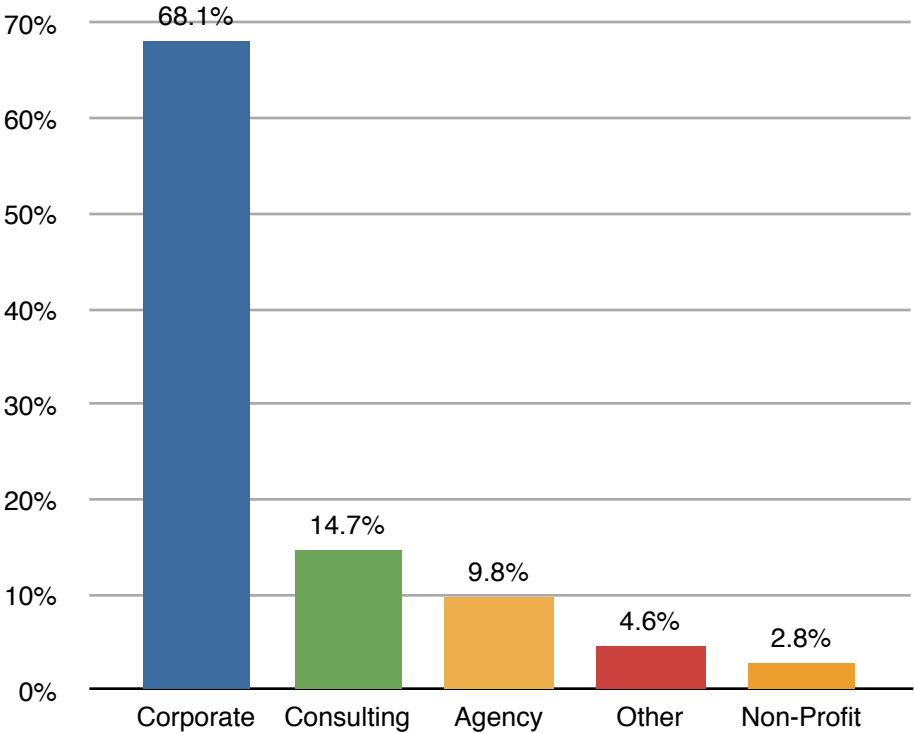


**Predominant Experience**

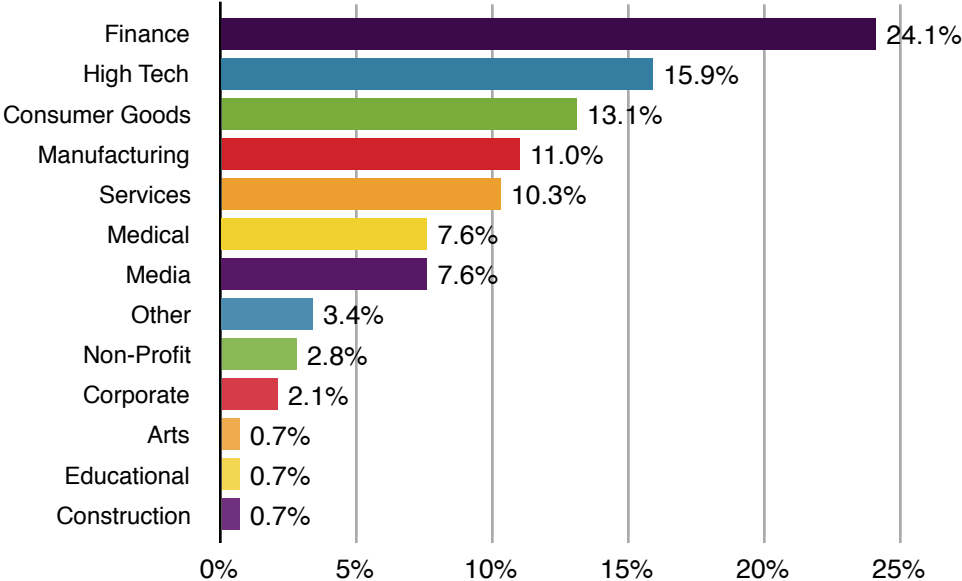


*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
About the Participants

**Predominant Experience**

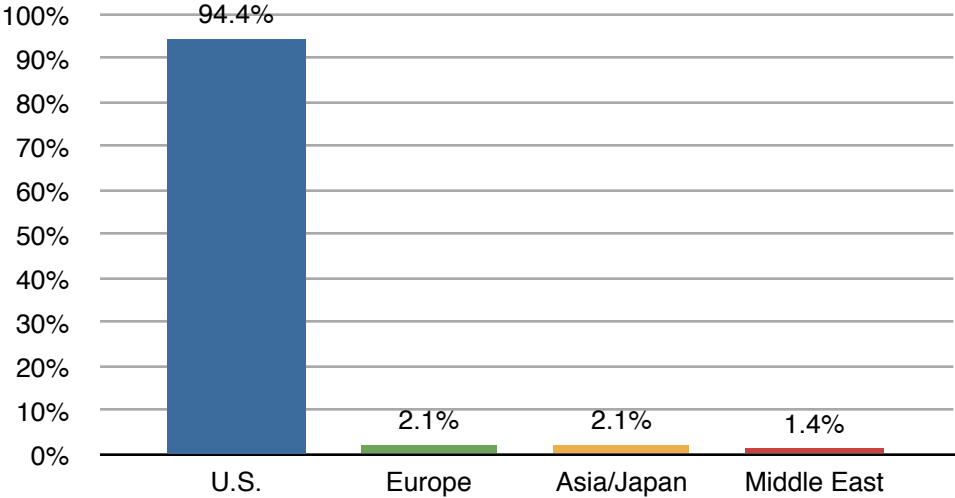


**Predominant Industry**



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About the Participants

**Location**



## **Addendum**

### **What are the most important trends impacting branding today?**

#### **Other - Verbatim Responses**

- Quality of the products and where they were made
- Increasing awareness amongst customers.
- There's a growing lack of knowledge and understanding in how to create/keep strong brands. The other trend is that as technology increases the quantity, quality and speed of information flow, the link between a brand and corporate social responsibility becomes stronger. What a brand stands for, use to be a question of product performance. Now, the brand must address whether it adheres to some higher purpose and value.
- Pressure to have brand be permissible nutritionally
- Proliferation of new brands makes it harder for both established and new brands to rise above the fray
- Product/service proliferation amplified by the global competitive landscape and mass customization
- Firms having such intense activity internally that branding is seen more as integrated marketing than who the company is
- Being more of a known entity/household name during the sales and lead generation process
- Access to many choices globally leading to less brand loyalty.
- Lack of clear, credible communication of brand value - and consistency between claim and behavior.
- Customer more willing to sift loyalties.
- Lack of real expertise in media, as media companies reduce staff to deal with their competitive pressures
- Social media
- The ability of the brand team to stay on message in light of all of the ways consumer can communicate and provide feedback.
- Trying to get ahead of true customer unmet need
- Social Media - Facebook, YouTube
- Consumer confidence
- The consumer shift to private label goods.
- Lack of brand integrity through amateurish execution
- Internet provides ability to "say anything" without specific need to prove with facts



**In your experience, what are the two major reasons for ineffective branding?**

**Other - Verbatim Responses**

- Getting on the radar of consumers - brand recognition
- Let's start with C-suite lack of deep understanding about how brands communicate-hence their failure to manage this. Understanding brands is really an extension of understanding how you change and shape public perception. Few CEOs have this ability.
- No emotional connection. Too much reliance on product attributes. Brand value prop needs to be unique.
- The operations and customer contact points need to be built and sustained before they can become key brand attributes.
- Lack of senior team support of the brand through all aspects of the business

**What makes a brand effective?**

**Verbatim Responses** (some responses were edited to remove names of specific companies and/or industries)

Name of the brand
Simple, with a clear, effective message that is instantly associated with the product/service
Brand recognition requires a consistent message overtime. To achieve this requires memorable creative consistency over all forms of communications and time.
A brand needs to solve a need.
Prompt and positive recall.
It's all about the relationship...how does the brand engage me, the audience/client, etc. How am I connected to the brand? Do we have of like interests?
Connection to the consumer. If a consumer cannot find a strong sense of connection with the brand, they are unlikely to have loyalty to it.
Promotes sales, typically through creating an emotional response or "loyal fans"
Strong value proposition
An effective brand delivers on a distinct, relevant positioning.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding

### Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Brand association to quality and such less volatile to price shopping. Loyalty
A successful brand advances sales of products and services by pervading the consciousness with positive impulses through a coordinated strategic effort of diverse tactics conducted in an evolving, responsive and cost-effective manner.
Quality, reputation, ability to adapt to current environment
Trust in the company and the product. Knowing that information on every product is widely available to the public brand consistency that reaches through every aspect of the company is key. Every sells and it depends if the company is looking for repeat sales or long term dedication. Support that can be relied on and follow up with. Unless there it destroys a brand and extinguishes brand loyalty. Integrity of the company and the brand.
Quality of product.
Stay true to brand mission and long term strategy.
Build integrity in products and way business is conducted.
Hire employees that emphasize the brand culture.
Connection to personal wants/desires/needs
Speaks to the aspirations of the customer, and has credibility in the customer's experience.
A well-developed understanding of its target market's needs/wants/desires (rational and emotional). A clear and differentiated brand strategy and positioning. A steadfast and consistent approach to how it applies its brand strategy to not only marketing communications but also business practices, behaviors, people, products, etc. (all aspects of its operations).
Trust
Consistency
Reliable brand attributes"
Transcending the product itself, standing for more than the ingredients.
Actual value provided by the product or service being sold. Honest claims, honest delivery on the claims made. People want good value from a trusted source.
When you have a good product that consistently delivers by either satisfying a need or providing customers with unique value--whether physical or emotional. The unique experience and its consistency will keep customers coming back and encourage them to influence others to engage.
When a person not only knows the name of the brand, they know what the product is used for, and they have a favorable connotation of it.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding

### Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Consistency of message and performance through all lines of business, visibility to the industry served, and clarity of distinction from competitors.
It has to be relevant, associated with the product or service, and carry a meaning that makes it memorable to consumers.
The best way for a brand to be effective is to have it mentioned repeatedly by a trusted source, which could be family, friends, peer group, financial advisor, critics, etc.
Well articulated value proposition
Ease of use
Product quality
Strong reputation, regardless of what the reputation is. Positive reputation is of course the goal, whether it is recognized for value, innovation, financial strength, others and combinations. Simple distinctive names help too.
Clear positive differentiation from competitors on factors that are important to the buyer; strong value proposition
The value or perceived value in the customer's mind.
Consistency in how the brand is expressed
Everyone in the business must understand the business' objectives - and what's expected of them
Clear and open internal communication from the top down
Ability to translate perceived value into an experience.
The brand evokes an immediate story about the results it is intended to achieve
Have true value and meaning, ability to resonate/connect with its audience on multiple levels, differentiate from the rest, stopping power, be memorable in its marketing,
Delivers on its promise.
The promise and fulfillment of that promise to the customer
Quality product, iconic advertising
A brand is effective when it has unaided awareness and there are positive associations that encourage the consumer to buy
Personally it's when a brand stands behind it's product if/when a consumer has a problem/issue.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding

### Addendum - Verbatim Comments

As the AMA defines the base term of "brand" as a "name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers." then what makes that effective is communicating it well widely and then giving customers a great experience in interacting with the brand. Each of those work in a circle to empower the other.
When it provides an easier entry path and competitive advantage.
Branding is effective with the right messaging, rich content and the ability to find innovative ways to engage the customer.
Differential advantage
It "connects" with its audience. It identifies and fulfills the needs of its audience.
Meets a genuine need and relevantly differentiates itself from similar solutions
Recognition when hearing name/seeing logo; translation of the brand name into brand promise; and a positive reaction or association with the brand.
Ability to clearly articulate the value prop and differentiate itself from competition
Experience, testimonial, whiz and bang, placement
Uniqueness / the ability to stand out
Identity that is visible via marketing
Mission statement & logo are constant, not changing"
Continuous, consistent promise = does what it says it will do
Consistent messaging supported by robust marketing.
Proven results, positive customer experience(s)
Simple, meaningful, associative
If the brand is able to differentiate and work on its USPs, the possibility of it being there for the long haul increases.
Consistent messaging/branding e.g., website, brochures, customer service, sales,
Delivering on its promises
When word of mouth can articulate the value prop of the brand. in the business area that I have serviced, this is particularly true...
An emotional connection that resonates
Addressing a clear unmet or solves a consumer need that is clearly articulated in their communication - awareness and trial

## Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding

### Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Name that has a positive feeling. You feel good having made a purchase.
Clear, credible communication of brand value - and consistency between claim and behavior on the part of the company/product.
It connects with its customer at both a conscious and subconscious level
Long term consistency of message in all communications and advertising.
High quality/excellent customer service/consistency of message and positioning
Association with quality, integrity and/or value
Instant recognition backed by a solid reputation.
A clear and memorable message that articulates valued differentiation to a target audience.
Clean. Easy to recognize. Memorable "look"
Clear and simple value proposition
Consistent communication of what makes the brand different and better than the competition.
Customer perception = goal of company
Reputation & market segment saturation.
The actual delivery of excellence, uniqueness or whatever else the brand represents.
Consistency, especially use throughout the organization in a consistent way. Also factors, design, strong, concise positioning and value proposition, advertising/marketing including social media, clear, straightforward messaging
Consistency message over time, and consistency in messaging to action. That is when a brand really resonates with customers and prospects.
A number of factors make a brand effective, but in all the core elements should pretty much remain the same. Ultimately ask yourself what does a brand represent, or what do you want it to represent. From there you need to work internally and then externally to support those ideals. Ensure you have a clear defined message, a centralized theme and values attached to that brand. Obviously once all this is completed and you've done all the homework you look to be visible, creating market penetration, awareness and loyalty. In a nutshell, the brands ability to be remembered (recall).
Resonance and relevance to solving a problem or providing a solution to a customer.
It differentiates the organization in meaningful ways.
It is relevant and credible to each audience it serves.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding

### Addendum - Verbatim Comments

It is brought to life internally and externally across all high impact touchpoints.
Its attributes are used as filters for decision making for everything the company says and everything it does.
It is sustainable long term.
Effective advertising, packaging and ad placement (TV) combined with good trade promotion.
Makes a distinctive, compelling and believable promise
If it answers people's needs
Recognition in marketplace.
Differentiation, ad spending, early to market
It has a meaning that reflects the underlying product
Simplicity, meaning easy to recognize and make a connection with. Need - product/ service has long an enduring need in marketplace. Familiarity - can recognize brand as product
Brand identity needs to represent a bringer of value to be memory worthy -- everything else is forgotten.
Instant recognition in the market category and knowledge of the companies capabilities.
Universal awareness when the brand actually replaces the actual name of the product itself i.e. making a copy several years ago was referred to as 'xeroxing'
Recognition of the value the customer/user can expect from the brand.
When what the consumer/user expects is what is delivered -- and that's the minimum. Exceeding the brand promise is even better, as long as what is over-delivered is relevant to the consumer.
Simple, memorable, visual.
You have to have a personal connection on some level with the product or service that is represented by the brand. I want to be more innovative - I connect to companies and respect and follow the brands of innovative companies hoping I will be more innovative some day by following them. The answer to my need (WIIFM) directly relates to the effectiveness of the brand - for me. That is the difficult task - there are 300 million of "me" out there to try to connect to.
Exposure and awareness
Recognition, Value Placement,

*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
 Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Simple consistent message that reflects what the brand brings to the market
Being able to remember it in connection with specific need / pain point
Reliability, most closely connecting to the target market's needs
Memorable and mission critically tied
A brand is effective when prospects think of the brand, and think positively of the brand, when they are considering an issue, problem, or need they have.
Developing an "experience" buying the brand and a "connection" with owning the brand.
Satisfies a customer need
Consistent messaging with its customer while maintaining relevant to them.
Same thing goes with a catering company. How do they stay relevant? What cultures are influencing our communities and can be a new trend to watch?
Identifying and sticking to a truly unique value proposition in a space that others cannot own
It must be memorable and differentiated; that is, it has to make an impact and be perceived as unique.
Connection with the consumer. Is the consumer aware of the Brand? Does the consumer identify with the brand? If yes, how and why?
Memorable and tied to something personal
Clear communication regarding product benefits.
Delivery against those benefits (i.e., the brand image fits the product or service)
Stability over time - not rapidly changing image / benefits"
Awareness of the brand and its implied value of the product
It resonates with the buyer's experience.
Having a clear positioning and being consistent
Rapid association with the brand to corporate/product value propositions.
Constant reinforcement, and product quality
A unique identity, consistently deployed across all media and always delivering on its promise
Recognition and the values it reminds us of.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding

### Addendum - Verbatim Comments

The delivery on its promise of a differentiated experience.
First it is when it is so integrated that the consumer sees the category and the brand as the same. Second when you are discussing the category in conversation, the brand helps people define or give as an example.
Honesty/truth in value prop
Exposure
Listening to the customer
Consistent/unified approach
Relevance to the target market
Distinction in the marketplace"
Good product, good quality, sustainability position in the marketplace. positive customer experience and feedback
Its promise needs to be unique and meaningful to the audience it targets. And it needs to deliver on what it promises.
People recognize the brand
They have a favorable image of the brand
They know what the brand is (product/service)
Positive awareness -- general exposure in the market coupled with a good reputation for delivering value.
When the name of the brand brings the product's value proposition to mind
Clear consistent set of values associated with the product by the users in a market (brands can have different values in different markets)
Positioning - Value to the consumer/user.
Visibility - The number of impressions and the number of venues/channels that a brand is positioned"
When communications (all forms/media) are coherent, reflect actual value proposition, and are targeted to the appropriate target audiences.
Name recognition in a positive way. So massive marketing exposure to the demographic that is sought is generally effective marketing if the "message" is effective at appealing to the demographic as to the benefit of the consumer or business.
Compelling and differentiated brand value proposition



*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
Addendum - Verbatim Comments

If it demonstrates that it understands and responds to the needs of the target market.
Positive impression, great last experience
Memorability and focused positioning
Peoples' perception of the brand and that comes from the buzz on the street about the brand, true or not.
The ability to clearly be identified and appear different.
Alignment and relevance to the customer's needs.
Immediate name recognition and association with desire value proposition

**What has been the most effective activity you have use in brand building? Why?**

**Verbatim Responses** (some responses were edited to remove names of specific companies and/or industries)

Activity	Why
Communications and interaction	
Direct to user marketing - targeted at labs/tech/designers	For industrial B2B products, critical to get user community bought in
The development of a long term (2 to 3 year) plan that encompasses all elements in the brands communications	In todays market place the consumer is inundated with messages repetition is one of the critical elements in gaining awareness and recognition.
Trade show	Engaging presence in front of decision makers that broadcast the brand even further
Advertising/Social Network Media	Reaches target audience
Online dispensation of retail products.	This has been received very nicely by the market, though the reach remains limited to the computer savvy segment.
1-1 building relationships	Because I research my particular audience and see if they have a interest in what I'm pitching and if so, how should I engage them in the way they want to be engaged.
Building awareness with key retail customers	Small businesses & startups ups have few options
Consistent and frequent application of logo and style guides	First priority is to be recognized, standout then become trusted
Developing a distinct, relevant positioning and communication it effectively to the target audience.	It differentiates you in world of me-too products and provides the target audience with a reason to choose your offering.
Customer endorsements	Credibility
Social Sites / Select Trade Pub Placement	These two methods reach our fairly narrow audience best

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Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Activity	Why
Used an agency to help conduct a brand portfolio analysis, thereby focusing ad efforts on strategic brands, and by adding consistency across branding guidelines for all brands.	Unifies, rather than fractures, the brand.
Advertising Blog	High quality blog that repeatedly hits target market with good information
Engagement activity trainings that impact the entire organization	Everything in an organization builds and supports the brand
Ensuring a quality product	Quality not only in the product but it has to be ingrained in the culture so everyone walks the talk. Quality is usually seen as value in the eyes of the consumer
Reference selling	Having well known brands as clients seems to increase perception of my company
Online video	Young demographic uses Google search to find solutions, video makes brands more visible in search
Brand engagement programs for staff	Helps to align the brand with behaviors and customer service. Gains buy-in to the brand and what it stands for internally. Builds a branded organization faster.
Advertising	Name recognition, gets the name out
Consistent brand building over long periods of time	Heightens brand awareness and recognition
Media relations, Web	Media relations, if done correctly, should help tell the brand story...or tie together what the company is announcing with the larger context of the company's mission, vision & values. The Clarity, Consistency and Constancy (3Cs) in telling this story reinforces the brand proposition/image. Through the media you gain the benefit of perceived independent third party validation.
We have done very little branding work	CEO has not believed our company needs to do so
Franchise building events with top customers	

*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
 Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Activity	Why
Google AdWords with smart campaigns	If you do the campaigns right people will find you. If you deliver on your promise they keep coming back.
Maintaining consistent quality and develop differentiated product.	Competitors in our categories can do neither.
External support events - charity events, etc.	Our core customer base has the money for philanthropy so they are involved in these types of events
Lead generation through contextually relevant content	Distinguishes us from competitors - helps client sales.
Public relations	Has increased market awareness and positive association with brand
Web	High on cost/effectivity curve
Personal Association with the brand lent known values to a brand whose values were unknown	Personal reputation in market had greater awareness and therefore brand values were established by association. This can be achieved by groups as well, so long as the values are clearly communicated and strategy is executed.
Attendance at conferences	One-on-one interaction important in market
Multi-media approach	Because there are so many different ways to find out about a brand
Running brand focus groups with stakeholders	It quashed myths about marketing. Gave people a forum to ask questions. Allowed me to educate people in how the basic principles in how to express a brand clearly in a way that doesn't confuse customers can make a big difference.
Exhibitions and trade shows	It is the most effective medium for the B2B sector and it was rated as the most preferred communication channel by our customer group in a brand survey.
Creating value-added intellectual capital	Demonstrating thought leadership is imperative for the consulting firms that we serve
Media relations	Third party endorsement; reaches largest audience
Advertising	Cluttered category -- reaches all audiences at once with consistent brand message

*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
 Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Activity	Why
Uncovering the customer value and promoting that	That's why customers buy brands!
Advertising	
Mix of PR and advertising in trade publications	Keeps brand in front of target B2B audience and includes 3rd party endorsement
Developing the value proposition supported by real brand attributes	Relevancy to the target customer, believable,
Not sure	
Our own magazine, webinar and blog	They communicate, without filter, my brand image and values
Work with user communities.	It allows for direct interaction, feedback and personalized messaging.
Email blasts	Reaches a targeted audience with a targeted message
Sales force promotion	Personal interaction
I do not believe any one activity is "most effective."	Branding is a strategic plan with multiple elements.
Changing behavior of people associated with the brand	Makes for seamless links with the brand & experience
Good customer service - delivering on our brand promise.	Because a positive customer experience drives WOM, which is especially important to a new brand.
Experience, word of mouth, testimonials, value proposition	I am in a highly personalized service business with clinical expertise and services that bring value to professionals in a variety of fields as well as end users
Marketing campaign	Increased visibility
Product trial	Have a product where the brand promise can not be seen & trial is needed to experience the benefits
Direct sales	They see the value proposition easily.
Direct customer contact	Need constant reminder of who and what
Word of mouth, sponsorship, client references	Latest experiments

*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
 Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Activity	Why
Below the line activities	Direct connect with the "buyers" of the service
Promotions of exclusive product distribution	Associate quality product/service with our company
PR	It's free and objective
Business networking	Services for IT is a "belly to belly" business still, and getting people to understand the value prop and mention to others grows cred. Using Linked In to get "referenceability" from active clients has been a good support tool to demonstrate "brand" to prospects, assisting in creating the "buzz"
Living the brand. Providing a true and consistent brand experience to our clients.	Clients have an emotional connection to the brand.
Trial	Most brands are build by "word of mouth," so assuming your product delivers against an unmet need people will repeat and spread the word after they try the product
Personal meetings with Target audience	Very targeted group
Market research	It frames brand messaging in terms of customer needs
Promotion of segmented brand messages	Helped position brand aright to targeted stakeholders, building profile and capital
Word of mouth	Referral/recommendations very effective in healthcare
Broadcast advertising media	Greatest scope, reach and impact. Ability to appeal to emotions of viewer.
Email blasts	Customized and targeted audience correctly
Customer testimony	Prospects believe current customers more than us.
Online distribution of intellectual capital (social media)	Differentiates our firm with a unique subject matter expertise.
Clarifying brand message and placement to be able to be seen by target audience	Familiarity and Trust are top of list
Interaction with clients to define brand	We don't sell to ourselves

*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
 Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Activity	Why
Just going through the brand launch now	
I prefer experiential based activities.	When done correctly, these offerings provide much more meaningful impact on a target and provide better communication of the brand values.
Direct customer contact (in a really small market)	Ability to control and narrow the message
Conference Exhibiting & related exposure (conference advertising/ sponsoring/speaking)	Highly concentrated on targeting potential production sources
Direct marketing (B2B)	We have a small niche market; can't cost effectively use mass media to target.
Trade show promotion/social media	Key target audience gives immediate awareness and response. New company so budget is limited.
Talking to customers and prospects every day, and tightening client facing operations around their comments.	Because clients will tell you why they are with you, and what they like and don't about your operations.
Working with agents	Builds loyalty with the agent
Integration across platforms	Ensures exposure to an engaged audience on a number of varying fronts
Tapping marketplace insights for brainstorming then quantitatively evaluating these ideas with the market, then operationalizing the brand internally before launching it externally	Too many organizations think they know their customers wants/ needs or spend dollars on research that doesn't provide the right insights to build a strong brand. Then they fail to bring it to life across all touchpoints so the internal team is fully vested in delivering it and the experience with the brand fully supports it.
Digital marketing targeting right market segment(s)	Cost effective way to reach target customers
Advertising	Exposure
Circle of Influence peer to peer marketing	Demonstrates relevance and credibility.
Consumer Insights	It increases brand reaction
Naming new products and services	I made the service name a variant of the value proposition

*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
 Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Activity	Why
Expansion focused on growth via demographics	
Spending money	Supporting brands is important to build trial
Delivering great service	Because your brand is what you do
None	
Psychological research	Know what my customer perceives as value
Print and electronic Advertising	Gets your name out
Referrals, word of mouth	Credibility coming from users
Peer to Peer selling	Most effective recommendation possible
Internal brand awareness	It helps people understand how to live the brand and therefore make the promise real
Producing solutions consistently for customers	Loyalty
Integrated Marketing	Alignment
Customer interaction in many forms	Able to communicate with focused group
Media Branding	High impact to large market
Social media	Huge numbers of people using it
Client referrals	Highest conversion rate
Public outreach/relations	Your company's publics must be kept informed and aware of your company/brand and product/service,
Internal training	Creates internal buy in and awareness
Thought leadership marketing	Helps differentiate the brand in a marketplace with too many competitors without obvious value propositions.
Social Media	Largest Reach, cheap, easy to produce
Thought Leader engagement	Masses look up to and trust
Consistent Customer Service	Customer Loyalty and word of mouth
Personal relationship building - communication	People will not try a brand unless they trust someone who represents it or uses it, thus demonstrating engagement



*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
 Addendum - Verbatim Comments

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Why</b>
Meeting with prospects and talking about the brand	It's easier to represent the brand in conversation than in writing.
Social Media, Online Media	Is targeted, is cost efficient, resonates with the target.
Success stories picked up by the press	It's all about what the customer can accomplish with our products
Frequent communication with customers (independent of the type of communication)	Strong need to reinforce brand image/benefits
Consistent brand inclusion and presentation across all products and through all of the channels	Consistent image and message to a targeted market segment
Clear distribution strategy	Creates loyalty
Web based marketing	Purchasing decisions are increasingly dependent on web research
Getting current customers to advocate	Testimonials add credibility and support the claims
Licensing	Introduces the brand to new sets of users in an engaging fashion
Business Development Center (TM)	Maintains continuous contact with prospect.
Cable Television	The segmentation available on both the channel and program level enabled us to speak directly to our hardcore user.
PR, White papers, testimonials and speaking at conferences	Business to Business. Advertising is always cost effective
Developing value prop and internal brand training - personal branding. (You are the brand)	When an organization understands the brand and how they as employees are the brand, it affects behavior in a positive way resulting in a company of brand advocates with a consistent message.
Print ad	Allows more differentiation than other types of communication
Networking and advertising	Largest audience and highest impact
Seminars	Get my message specifically to those who are interested

*Challenges and Opportunities in Effective Branding*  
 Addendum - Verbatim Comments

Activity	Why
As a financial services marketer nothing has been more effective than getting staff alignment	The staff deliver the brand values and make them real
Clear, well-differentiated value proposition	Marketing efforts have to reflect, support, and communicate the value proposition as it is the focal point for a brand and provides needed direction as to differentiation and audience.
In store demos	Engaging and credible
Trade shows with pre mailings and advance trade journal advertising	Both built name recognition, as well as "presence" marketing at a particular show.
Understanding and building on your value proposition.	You must know what you're selling. If you don't get it, how can you expect others to get it?
Partnering with the media	Promotes a sense of objectivity
Direct tailored communications to relevant prospects	More relevant the better
Ongoing internet marketing that includes regular online press releases, articles, etc.	Need to keep in front of people in this fast ever changing world
Direct mail	Given a well researched list, provides the ability to get to the right people.
Conveying the value proposition of the company	
Involvement in development trade association education	Shows expertise
Singleminded consistent execution of the fundamentals	Aggregated scalability

## About Top-of-Mind Branding

Top-of-Mind Branding is committed to making our clients' brands top-of-mind in their categories. We do this by helping our clients avoid or overcome Brand Limiters that can negatively impact their brands. For more information, please visit [www.topofmindbranding.com](http://www.topofmindbranding.com).

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Top-of-Mind Branding  
13 Milton Drive  
Yardley, PA 19067

215-499-9290

[www.topofmindbranding.com](http://www.topofmindbranding.com)