

KB CommEntary

KB COMM • SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Volume 5 Issue 1 • January 2013

Greetings!

Something Brand New for the New Year

Now that the holidays are a distant memory (and the world didn't end), we thought we'd better send out 2013's first issue of *KB CommEntary*. We did some rebranding recently, and it got us thinking: what is a *brand*, really? There's more to it than just images and graphics, as we'll discuss below.

What's Up at KB COMM?

At KB COMM, we provide mission-critical communication and learning services to clients in a variety of industries. Thanks to our established and new clients for keeping us busy. Recent and ongoing projects include:

- Writing a case study of a customer implementation for an IT consultancy
- Creating and revising job descriptions for the Careers website of a high-tech manufacturer
- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including communications to employees from the CEO and executive leadership team, customer letters, trade show presentations and materials, and product marketing brochures
- Writing, formatting, and performing quality control reviews of large, complex chemical residue studies intended for regulatory submission on behalf of a federally funded, cooperative research organization
- Reviewing and editing for consistency and accuracy response documents and associated modules for electronic submission to FDA and other health authorities on behalf of a medical device manufacturing company

KB COMM LLC is a certified Women's Business Enterprise. We are officially qualified to participate in corporations' woman- and minority-owned vendor programs.

Please keep us in mind for your communication or training projects.

Tips and Tales

We've all used what we've called a *kleenex* or *band-aid*, even if they weren't made by Kimberly-Clark or Johnson & Johnson. Kleenex and Band-Aid are examples of brands—names or symbols that represent a product, service, or organization. Brands sometimes become so successful and well-established that we use them generically to refer to entire classes of products or services. That's the ultimate in brand recognition—a very good thing!

What IS a Brand, Anyway?

Brand is the personality that identifies a product, service, or company and how these things relate to key constituencies such as customers, employees, partners, investors, etc. Brand is represented or expressed by a name, term, sign, symbol, design, logo, or combination thereof.

For example, the names Coca-Cola and Coke are brands that belong to the Coca-Cola Company. The "Coca-Cola" logo that appears in script font on bottles, cans, and vending machines is also a brand that has been trademarked by the Coca-Cola Company. Brands and trademarks are closely related and sometimes thought of interchangeably.

A company's brand represents and encompasses the sum of how the company is perceived by its stakeholders. When a company has sufficient brand equity, consumers often buy “the brand” rather than the company's products on their own merit. Consequently, brand is a company's most valuable fixed asset. The value of the public's perception of a company sometimes far exceeds what the company is worth on paper.

Why Should I Care?

Why are we telling you this? Because your company's communications and information products are critical elements of your brand. What you tell your stakeholders (also known as messaging) and the means by which you convey these crucial messages is at the heart of branding.

On a practical level, consider things like your company's name, logo, product and service trademarks, website, and printed communication materials. For maximum branding effectiveness, you should use your company's name, logo, and trademarks in a consistent way in the media through which you communicate. Most companies have standards for such usage, but unfortunately, these standards are often ignored or not understood. Misuse of your company name, logo, or trademarks diminishes your brand and makes it less valuable.

Likewise, your company's website, social media, printed collateral, press releases, business cards, ads, and other communications should clearly and consistently express your brand. Consistent look, feel, style, and messaging are critical to building and maintaining your brand. This is why companies have (or should have) messaging guides, graphic standards, templates, and style guides. For example, placement and size of your logo, when it's ok to use a black-and-white version of your logo, and acceptable typefaces and font sizes are details that need to be worked out and followed scrupulously. But all too often, this important guidance is ignored, and the brand suffers.

We at KB COMM are as guilty of this as anyone. When we started KB COMM, one of the first things we did was engage a designer to come up with a logo and other graphic elements that would help define our brand. Our business cards, website, and marketing collateral all had the same design and appearance. We wanted our clients and other stakeholders to recognize the unique “look” that identified us as KB COMM. So far, so good!

As time went on, our brand and look began to evolve, which is typical. We made some changes to elements of our branding, but we didn't make them consistently or uniformly. Not so good.

In reviewing our website, printed collateral, and advertising, we realized we were sliding down a slippery branding slope. We didn't want to dilute or compromise our brand, so we went back to the drawing board and updated our various communication platforms with a new look and feel that better reflects who we are today. And this time, we promise we're going to stick to it!

And please remember, *when it has to be right*, KB COMM is here to help.

Sincerely,

Kathy

Kathy Breuninger

KB COMM

[Kbcommlc.com](http://kbcommlc.com)

