

The Best Way To Grow Your Brand Is To Narrow Its Focus

It's extremely tempting to want your brand to be everything to everybody. Conversely, it's nearly impossible for any brand to own more than one perception in the mind of the consumer. Bet you've heard of Boston Market™. It used to be called Boston Chicken® and was a much more relevant brand. A Subway™ franchise might be a decent piece of real estate to get your hands on. While they dabble a bit here and there with soup and personal pizza, 90% of what they do is subs. Ah...narrow the scope of the brand and the brand will actually grow and become more relevant to the consumer.

Size, as it relates to stretching a brand, really doesn't matter. It actually works in the opposite. Your objective as a brand manager should be to dominate or own a category. If you want to compete in another category, it's best to do it through another brand. Or, go buy a brand that competes or dominates the market segment you'd like to get into.

Proctor and Gamble. I think you'd agree this is a hugely successful consumer products company. Know why? They understand that different market segments require different brands. Crest® is toothpaste. Head and Shoulders® is shampoo. Ivory® is soap. They market to different health and beauty segments via different brands. Tide® is laundry detergent. Bounty® is paper towels. Cascade® is dishwasher cleaner. They market to different household care segments with different brands. P & G does not attempt to market to different segments with a single brand. They understand the fundamentals of branding and do it with multiple brands. It'd be ridiculous if they attempted to market Crest as a shampoo or Bounty as a laundry detergent.

However, brands in our endemic industry try to stretch too far all the time. We have ammo companies that attempt to market boots under the same brand name. We have gun companies that attempt to market saws and tools under the same brand name. Our hunt, shoot, and fish industries aren't going solo here-numerous other market sectors have attempted to stretch brands through the years and will continue to do so as time passes.

Protect thy brand. Position your brand so it owns a singular perception in the mind of the consumer and you'll have a brand that'll stand the test of time. Stretch your brand into categories where other category-leading brand names exist, and you will weaken your brand over time.