Branding Only Works on Cattle

Book Review
Branding Only Works on Cattle, by *Jonathan Salem Baskin*

Unlike my other book reviews and synopses, this is a short one – mainly because I really didn't like the book.

It's not that the author didn't have a valid point, because he does. I didn't like it because an intriguing argument never got developed further than what you can read in Chapter 1.

His thesis is that branding doesn't work. His proposal is that behavior is what matters.

Marketing should drive behavior. And then your behavior during the buying experience becomes the branding in the customer's mind. From that point on, it's not what you project that matters; they have experienced you, and that experience dictates what your brand really is.

Now, I expect a book this thick to expound on those ideas and make us better marketers as a result … but it really didn't. The paragraph above is a better synopsis of the book's premise than what the author provides, if I say so myself.

200 pages into the book, there was still not much more explanation, clarification or recommendation. Just lots of examples of branding that "doesn't work."

Mr. Baskin notes that often nothing measurable is even expected of branding, yet branding activities can burn through a marketing budget in a great hurry. That's why, more than any images you may try to project, your behavior *is* your brand.

> ***Baskin: "The rest of marketing is intended to get people to buy stuff. Branding isn't supposed to sell anything more than an idea."***

The only valuable nuggets I was able to find – the only portion even recognizable as useful recommendations – were buried in the middle of Chapter 8:
1. Study the "Chronology of Purchase Intent." (We've covered this basic idea in our own pieces on Advancing the Sale/Progression of a Sale.) Know the path a customer takes in making decisions.
2. Create a "map of influences." (We've covered this basic idea in our own pieces on a Customer-Centered mindset.) Know the why/where/when/how of purchase decisions.
3. Create "events" that move a person along the path towards a purchase.
4. Measure.

Seriously, read the first few pages to get the premise, then skip to pages 191-192. That's my best recommendation for you.

Maybe that's what frustrated me the most – the fact that I agree with his basic premise. There are tremendous flaws with branding, at least as practiced today. And especially for independent business like the ones I serve.

Any money wasted is too much. (Which is why I don't recommend sponsorships unless you're doing it to support a cause, not to get marketing value.)

So drive action. Pursue response. And behave as if your brand depends on it, because it does.

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