

# Ventura Insight: Outsourcing your brand

## Who's babysitting your brand?

**Outsourcing has many benefits – doing so without looking after your brand delivers few of them. Getting it wrong is not an option!**

**If you outsource any part of your business, however basic or unimportant you may feel it is, you outsource your brand and its values with it. If you select the right outsourcer they can help strengthen your brand by working in partnership with you to reach shared objectives, get it wrong and your outsourcer can unravel years of brand building.**

The traditional case for outsourcing will always remain. Organisations looking to outsource will look for cost savings, efficiency and business focus. However, in the modern outsourcing age these issues are almost taken for granted by organisations wishing to outsource and expectations of outsourcing providers are now much higher.

A lift and shift operation for a few pounds of savings is no longer enough. Organisations are looking to their outsourcing provider for continual process improvement and embedding of brand values to deliver benefits to the organisation and their customers.

### **Brand value**

An organisation's brand is its gateway to the public, and can often be the organisations biggest asset, both as an emotional link to customers and as a line on the balance sheet. The largest brand in the Interbrand Best Global Brands 2007 was Coca-Cola valued at \$65,324 million. With this

much value in your brand, would you trust it to someone else? Could outsourcing damage your consumer appeal?

The answer has to be yes, outsourcing could damage your consumer appeal, but only if you let it. Get it right and your outsourcer can help your brand progress.

When you outsource a process, especially a front line activity such as contact centres, you also put your brand and its public perception in someone else's hands, so you must be sure they will take care of it.

### **Beyond the textbook**

The textbook reason of 'outsource to cut costs' suddenly becomes less important if your provider doesn't embed your brand and organisational values into the service it provides for you, and doesn't work with you to meet your vision and corporate objectives.

A bargain basement hourly rate may be attractive, but if this is causing customer annoyance and ultimately defection, suddenly the sums don't add up as customer numbers and the public's faith in your brand diminish.

Recent research from analysts Merchants suggest that bad call centres cost UK businesses over £800 million a year with one in five of customers withdrawing their custom purely due to a bad experience with an organisations call centre. This means serious damage to your brand and its image, and shows just how important getting your outsourcing right is.



# Outsourcing your brand (continued)

## The brand marriage

Outsourcing should be a strategic partnership, whatever the process. Only through working together can you really understand where each others similarities and differences are, and what you need to work on, to deliver the brand excellence you require from your outsourcer. This isn't always a smooth ride, but it's an essential one.

Working together in partnership should develop your brand for the better. Your outsourcer needs to understand and believe in the values of your organisation. Okay so the sceptics amongst you may say this all sounds like 'fluffy marketing guff', but it is vital that operations and brands become happy bedfellows from day one.

Your outsourcer must understand your offers and key messages. If you build your service around simplicity, yet your outsourcer passes calls from pillar to post every time a customer rings, years of marketing spend to build up this key message can be wrecked in minutes. As markets and product offerings converge, service and brand experience are now becoming ever more important as a differentiator.

Your outsource partner should add value to your brand. If efficiency and innovation are key elements of your brand, your outsourcer should be working to deliver this with continuous improvements and innovation to help strengthen your key messages.

A great brand outsourcer must:

- Be a strategic partnership
- Develop your brand for the better
- Understand your offers and key messages
- Add value to your brand

They should challenge your processes and regularly bring new ideas to the table to better serve you and your customers, and ultimately strengthen your brand.

### More than just a process

Research has shown that those companies that outsource for improvement, actually save considerably more money than those that outsource just to save costs. This is really just common sense, as your customers crave the same things you do. They too want their call to be resolved first time, they don't want to spend longer than necessary on the phone and they want an experience consistent with brand perceptions and expectations.

So let's recap, you are never just outsourcing a process, but also outsourcing your brand, forget this and the damage could be critical. A partnership with your outsourcer is key, and they should work with you to progress your brand, building improved processes to deliver your brand values and the brand experience your customers expect.

Whilst traditional outsourcing reasoning is still valid, times have changed and your outsourcer should be delivering innovation and improved customer experience, not just cost savings and business focus. Remember your brand is possibly the most important asset your business owns, make sure all that handle it do so with care.

**If you're concerned that the hands looking after your brand aren't taking enough care, then contact the experts at Ventura.**

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