

## Your Business Identity

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A Report By  
Xalles Limited

## Customer Service Is No Longer Enough

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Too many organizations today focus on the image they have as opposed to their identity. Most medium and large sized organizations have some type of customer service training program for all front line staff. This training usually focuses on service and escalation procedures, handling difficult customer situations, and how to keep a positive attitude and smile when working with customers. Some organizations have facilitated their staff's mastery of these skills and procedures. You will spot these companies anytime you have a problem. They immediately know what to do, who to call, and what their policy says they can offer you to try to keep your business and keep you happy. It's impressive when it happens. In today's world of international mergers and acquisitions, industries that are reinventing themselves and a more fluid change in staffing roles, business is faced with a new challenge: *How to create and communicate a business identity to our customers.* Good quality service will always be important to customers, but now they also want to know what and who they are dealing with in a business relationship. They want to know what you are in business for, what you believe in, who you partner with, and why it would be good for them to be a long term customer of yours.

## Identity Versus Image

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Image change initiatives have been getting kicked off in many organizations because the front line staff or the marketing people get customer feedback of this nature:

- Customer service is inconsistent or poor
- Your firm has merged so many times I don't know who owns it or in which country it is based
- I don't know who to do deal with
- It's not clear which of your product lines apply to me
- Is your organization still financially viable?

Image is often symptom of the larger problem of business identity. The intrinsic values, beliefs and attitudes of the people and management of an organization will do more to shape the identity of the company, than the effect of any image change program. Image changing initiatives often do more to conflict with the real identity of the organization than improve it and usually cost a lot of money. The phrase, "inner beauty", can be applied to organizations, just as it's commonly applied to individuals.

## Identifying Your Business Identity

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To document your business identity you need to be able to answer the following questions:

- Who is running the company?
- What are the company goals?
- What are the company values?
- What are the customer responsibilities for each process?
- How do marketing and promotional materials describe the organization?
- What motivates employees to stay with this organization?

## Improving Your Business Identity

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Customers, processes, financial conditions and new leadership styles can all be reasons why organizations need to look at changing their identity. The “inner beauty” of an organization is developed by starting with the core and identifying strengths and weaknesses. To improve your business identity, begin by taking the following 10 steps:

1. Identify the leadership’s vision of “What are you in business for?”
2. Poll customers and employees to ask their opinion of #1 and do a gap analysis.
3. Review the organizational goals and objectives (long and short term) and identify which ones do not support the core identity.
4. Poll employees to obtain a list of perceived organizational values and the examples that led to these opinions.
5. Create a list of leadership values and beliefs and do a gap analysis with the staff results.
6. Analyse the processes, procedures and policies to determine which ones support or conflict with the desired values and goals.
7. Analyse product packaging including the way products and services are delivered to customers to determine which elements support or conflict with the desired values and goals.
8. Analyse current and planned marketing and communication tools to determine which ones support or conflict with the desired values and goals.
9. Create a consistent set of values and goals and communicate those to staff.
10. Prioritize the changes required from the analysis in numbers 6, 7, and 8 above and immediately start making the high impact changes.

For all changes you attempt to make, set up a customer and employee feedback mechanism to monitor that you are steering the identity consistently. Many organizations spend a lot of time and money creating annual goals, objectives and other organizations even try to list their desired value sets. The organizations that fail to meet the desired results often are the same organizations that have goal and value lists that are inconsistent with the true business identity. Be one of the organizations that learn how to develop and nurture its own inner beauty.