

Preface

Brand building goes far beyond creating awareness of your name and your customers promise. It is a voyage of building a corporate soul and infectiously communicating it inside and outside the company to all your partners, so that your customers truly get what your brand promises.

Although one of the authors wrote this statement many years ago, we are all still committed to it. The world around us has changed and is constantly changing – every year, every month, and every day. Technologies/products and services/marketplaces emerge, evolve, and disappear. Along with globalization and hyper competition has come the explosion of choices in almost every area. Business-to-Consumer (B2C) companies have identified and applied branding and brand management decades ago to adapt to these changes. Many Business-to-Business (B2B) companies still regard such effort as irrelevant for them. Recently though, B2B brand management has been given more and more attention by researchers as well as practitioners all over the world. Following up on this recent development, we offer the following central tenet:

Brand management for industrial goods and services represents a unique and effective opportunity for establishing enduring, competitive advantages.

Whether you are selling products or services, a strong brand is the most important and sustainable asset your company can have. Your brand strategy should always be the guiding principle behind every decision and every action. This book aims to put B2B brands and branding into their actual context. It describes current thinking and

best practice, draws comparisons and highlights differences to B2C, and ventures thoughts about the future of B2B.

Branding is not only about creating fancy names and logos. To equate branding with such superficial cosmetic effort is like judging a book merely by its colorful cover. It is absolutely crucial to understand that there is more to brands than meet the eye. Just take one moment and try to imagine a world without brands. There would be no *Porsche*, *Mercedes-Benz*, *BMW*, *Volvo*, *Chrysler*, and no *Ford*, just a variety of automobiles that are more or less alike. Which would you buy? Which company would you trust? On which attributes would you make your purchasing decision? Such a world would lack much more than just fancy brand names and logos – it would lack one of the most important factors that simplify our life in an increasingly complex environment: **Orientation**. Brands differentiate, reduce risk and complexity, and communicate the benefits and value a product or service can provide. This is just as true in B2B as it is in B2C!

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