WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME FOR REFRESHING?



BRAND MARKETING TIPS By Ron Romanik, Romanik Communications

The primary challenge when "refreshing" a brand, marketing, advertising, package design, or public relations campaign is to lure new customers in while

making the change seem natural to existing customers. It's certainly true that, sometimes, the most loyal fans of a brand are also the most easily "put off" by a change, because they feel their loyalty has been betrayed.

But it is up for debate how long that indignation actually lasts. So, is that small percentage of devoted followers even worth worrying about? Absolutely. Because that fan base appreciates the core essence, or underlying values, of the brand position most fully, and you can learn a lot from listening to them. Maybe even more important, there's a part of that loyal fan inside all of that brand's customers, both current and former.

Rekindling interest in a brand or product then comes down to artfully executed strategy that connects with consumers as a blend of the past, present, and future. Luckily, the risk involved in making a significant break from the past may be lessening each year. Because of the frequency of changes in branding and communications strategies has been increasing dramatically, consumers are less thrown off by any repositioning — as long as it's an evolution, and not a revolution.

If the parent brand is strong and the change retains the most salient core elements, today's consumers accept these changes as just "business as usual." If this is true, then choosing your core elements during any launch — like a catchy, appropriate, and memorable product or service name — is even more important for the long-term success of a brand or company.

Consumer behavior in the modern era is still a moving target. Most refresh initiatives should identify a brand's prototypical consumer and address that person's needs in-depth. A more complex approach separates target consumers into categories such as loyalists, occasional users, brandneutral shoppers, etc.

In segmenting potential users of a product or service, never forget the valuable "early adopters." These consumers are often more social than the rest of the population, what Malcolm Gladwell called "Connectors" in his book *The Tipping Point*. What's more, early adopters are also usually active consumers who are eager to provide constructive feedback that can make your product or service even better.

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