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XL Group
Insurance
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And you
thought it was
just about
logos...

From billboards to boardrooms, brand consultancy venturethree give five reasons why brand matters to every person in every business:

1. Businesspeople are people too

Business-focused clients often tell us that brand doesn't matter in a business to business world. But we think there's no such thing as business to business. It's all people to people. It's about personalities, moods, inclinations, ambitions and wants. It's about relationships.

No matter how analytical an industry, individuals will be swayed by feelings, by personal "chemistry" and by the images, ideas and phrases that have the power to touch them. A top risk manager's views may be influenced by what her teenage son thinks is cool. The COO of a car manufacturer is swayed by what her husband feels about a supplier's environmental record. The marketing director of a national logistics company may be affected by what his partner thinks of another city's football team. We're sentient beings. All of us dip into popular culture, are linked to the spirit of our times. We make personal and human judgments and choices and, on the margin at least, are led by emotions.

2. Who are you and why are you here?

Big business hasn't had an easy ride over the last few years with collapses, bailouts and recessions in the news every week. In fact 'business' has run the risk of becoming a dirty word and big organisations are suddenly in a position where they have to justify their existence. The ones that will thrive are ones that play a positive role in the future. This doesn't mean a token CSR policy or 'green-focused' advertising campaign, but through using their product and specialist skills to move the world forward. It's not about substituting profit for philanthropy either. When organisations have a purpose that people can relate to, they become more in demand: better business equals better business. Your brand is simply the way you show this purpose to the world.

3. Real brands make a real difference

Brand should make a practical difference to people the whole business through. From press ads to procurement, websites to welcome processes, it should help people to make decisions in their work, day to day. It should affect which projects you take on and which ones aren't right for you. The type of computer programs your systems run. Even something as seemingly superficial as the choice of hand-driers in your toilets.

Too many brands make the mistake of thinking they can project one image to the outside world without living that internally. This doesn't just lead to confused customers, you'll also be dealing with cynical staff. They'll be the first to know if the brand isn't a true reflection of who you really are. Take Google for example, whose brand is just as present in their offices and working practices as anything that we outsiders see.

Recruitment is another place where brand can make a huge difference. The way your job adverts are written and the personality that comes across will have a direct influence on

The best brands are not merely self-reflective. They have a world view.

how well your applicants fit. Generically written, safe job ads will attract generic, safe people. But show off your brand's personality, and you'll cut out people who aren't what you're looking for and attract the ones you are. Job ads that accurately reflect your company's brand personality could even save you a whole round of interviews and help you find the perfect match from the get go. All in all we don't think that there's a corner of the business where brand can't make a difference.

4. It's harder than ever to stand out through product alone

We live in a world of search results and tweeting. Live streams and comparison websites. The apparently unachievable economic ideal of 'perfect knowledge' is getting closer and closer. Because of this, products and prices are getting closer to each other too. As these all blend into one, brand will make you stand out. Of course, a good brand can't cover up a bad product. But if what businesses are doing is the same, why and how they're doing it can be the deciding factor when it comes to winning over customers.

5. The world's getting smaller

Organisations' identities used to be strongly linked to where they came from. But as businesses go global, nationality becomes less and less relevant. On the flip side consistent identity becomes more and more important. As a unifying factor, brand can hold it all together and be the focal point that everything else gathers around. Aesthetic sensibilities and visually recognisable symbols are one thing. But through choosing powerful, universal human truths, you can bind everything together and state what you stand for, the whole world over.

Brands that stand for something and appeal to people inside and out will lead the way over the next few years. They're the ones making changes and taking risks. Because when it comes to your brand, sometimes the biggest risk isn't taking one.