

# Consensus — Need It Be A Chore If The Facts Are There?

More and more forward-looking organizations are using analytical methodologies—some simple, some, literally worthy of a Nobel Prize—to guide their brand strategies and decisions.

Fact-based, rather than intuitive approaches, obviously result in more effective and efficient brand management strategies. Lippincott’s own methodology, Strategic Brand Assessment<sup>SM</sup>, isolates brand “drivers,” to ensure that investments are made in brand-building areas that have the greatest impact on changing customer behavior. But, fact-based approaches can yield another equally important benefit—delivering the consensus needed across a company to successfully execute a brand program.

Let’s face it, while determining what to do is important, actually getting it done often requires more work. Marshalling the resources and arousing the “corporate will” to embrace, execute and “stick to it” is critical to any effective program.

Successful brand efforts require the involvement of much more than solely the people in marketing. Since a brand’s image is influenced by both experience and communications, a variety of functional areas and divisions or business units need to be engaged; sales, R&D, HR, facilities and the list goes on.

Getting a group as diverse as these together on anything can be a difficult task. Getting them to understand the value of the brand and then agree on, invest time and money in and commit to a brand strategy can be nearly impossible—without a fact-based, analytical approach.

“Selling through” a program requires having solid answers to the all too common questions that are asked: “How did you arrive at that brand positioning? Why should we invest that much? How are you going to measure success, short and long-term?” And, of course, “What will be the return on investment?”

In the past, arriving at the answers was based on estimation, intuition, “accepted” industry knowledge and sometimes, limited research. Whether or not the answers were accepted often was based on the salesmanship of the project presenter—and worked only for those actively engaged in the actual process.

When the same questions are asked by those ultimately responsible to execute the program, the passion and presentation skills are missing, only the facts—or lack of them—remain. The result can be differences of opinion, internecine battles, loss of commitment and ultimate failure.

A fact-based approach and plan stands on its own, needs no presentation skill and can convince even the most cynical. The plan is on-target, understood and actionable. The irrefutable evidence is there.

*Contributed by John V. Allen, a senior partner at Lippincott Mercer*

