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Striving to be Different

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Striving to be Different:

WRAPPING UP YOUR POINT OF DIFFERENCE

It seems a strange quirk of human nature that we spend our formative years desperately trying to emulate our peers and a large chunk of our business lives desperately trying to appear very different. The latter tendency is probably a little easier to explain than the rationale for teenage mimicry.

Everybody of course has got something to sell. From the scrawled signs mushrooming at nearly every highway farm gate to the slick advertising campaigns of the multi-nationals. In the tussle to grab attention in this information-strewn landscape, being different, or at least being perceived as such, is increasingly a matter of economic survival. Most businesses need a distinctive added-value proposition to counter the familiar pattern of reduced margins arising from commoditisation.

As brand strategists, one of our key tasks is to assist business clients to grasp and articulate their true point of difference. To locate a unique piece of real estate that they can, over time, outrightly own. If it's carefully and consistently developed, this 'real estate' can add considerable value to the brand and therefore the equity of the business.

The point of difference effectively becomes the positioning for the brand and gives rise to the positioning statement or tagline. This is designed to be a single, memorable idea expressed uniquely to connect with the hearts of consumers.

So how do you arrive at this point of difference? **The first point to make is that, in our view, every organisation has a point of difference.** It may not be earth-shattering in scope, but within each organisation there is invariably a distinct kernel with sufficient truth to it to provide a sound, brand-building platform.

Arriving at the point of difference is often a distillation process whereby BRR will assist clients to determine their attributes (the functional characteristics of their product or service offering) and their brand values (the more distinctive benefits from the customer perspective). In most cases, the point of difference will surface from the latter, as the factor with the most stand-out quality in terms of customer appeal and competitor differentiation.

At BRR we encourage our clients to devote serious time and energy to teasing out their point of difference and building a back story to bring their POD to life. The few companies that we can't convince tend to be the ones looking for instant payback from their brand initiatives, which is generally unrealistic. In reality, brands are mid- to long-term investments that reward patience, consistency and careful stewardship. They also take a bit of bravery to weather the necessary gestation period before the brand gains traction and the rewards flow through. Straddling the investment 'puddle' undoubtedly pays dividends. Having established your POD, it then assumes driver status within the business and becomes the litmus test against which all manner of business decisions are tested.