

The Power of your Brand *Ricardo Perret

If there's something you should guard as an entrepreneur, business executive or a mom and pop restaurant owner should be your BRAND. As human beings we are programmed to associate every object, place or individual with the simplest language structure, a word (sometimes even two or three). This word, the brand, is the bridge formed between something perceived and a group of meanings that are created in your mind or that of the consumer. The big question then, is: what meanings, conscious as well subconscious, are associated between your brand and your client?

At Mindcode we know that brands "live" associating meanings at three levels of the human mind corresponding to the three brains that co-exist within the neural structure: Neo-cortex, limbic, and reptilian. In order to see this clearly, let's observe one of the world's most recognized brand in the last 30 years that be it as it may, this particular brand isn't one of a product, neither one of service, but of a person (and a business at the same time). The brand is MADONNA. At the end it will be easy to understand how to Innovate a Brand can be simple, once you associate your brand to powerful meanings in the 3 human brains, just as Madonna has done so.

For this exercise we cannot conform to understanding the meanings around this brand at the rational or logical level, but in order to understand the Madonna phenomenon we must penetrate the unconscious of the people, "go deep" –as called in psychology—to the limbic brain (emotional) and the reptilian (instinctive).

Madonna in the Cortex:

As you will remember, the cerebral cortex is the rational, logical, the one that loves numbers, and the one who analytically evaluates everything (even a person's behavior). In this brain Madonna represents an extremely successful artist who has set world records, who has remained all her life as the "queen of pop". She has not only launched dozens of albums but has made documentaries, movies and books and has "advanced" music into the future by combining different styles. What's more, with her personal life, she is an icon and leader in the efforts to support disabled children. She has married several times, is an entrepreneur, practices trendy technique of meditation, kabala, exercise and Yoga. Madonna at the cerebral cortex of whoever perceives her, including her fanatics, is associated with a meaning of SMART AND SUCCESSFUL WOMAN. This is a highly connective meaning especially with women.

Madonna in the Limbic Brain:

This brain, subconsciously, is in charge of emotions, feelings, and senses. Every brand wanting to be desired by clients will have to innovate in developing powerful meanings in this brain. Madonna is a brand that generates an additional emotion in women, as well as men; INSPIRATION, she has never, ever, presented herself as insecure, afraid or ashamed. If there's an icon of SECURITY it would be her precisely. Even upon doing things that

would make other women feel publicly ashamed, she maintains her head up, tall as a three in the eyes of her public. Madonna is FUN, more than anything with her music, one of the greatest elements that have helped us to distract. We listen to her in the radio, television, follow her through the internet, and we read about her in the papers. Further more, Madonna is SOPHISTICATION. Always in fashion; travels the world, stays at the best hotels, her shows bright with lights and glamour, she and her dancers have the newest choreography. Not everyone likes her, some even hate her, but she is undoubtedly far beyond the feelings of LOVE/HATE that she generates.

Madonna in the Reptilian Brain:

It would seem that we have covered all of Madonna, but there is one more aspect, the most powerful, that which impacts in the inner most unconscious level of the public. For every brand it is fundamental to be associated with powerful meanings at the reptilian level. Madonna has challenged society's status quo from the start of her career up to this day. Her first great bold statement was her name (Madonna = virgin, in Latin). That well remembered song "like a virgin" that was also the title of her album with which in 1984 reached record breaking levels of sales and established her fame world wide. Then, performed publicly her famous scene where she was shown in a bed simulating sexual movements and sounds. She made erotic videos and published her book SEX which shocked not just the conservative world but the liberal as well. She interpreted a sadomasochistic and nymphomaniac woman in her movie Body of Evidence. Then she openly kissed with Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears and as if not enough, she has staged her latest unthinkable act of "crucifixion" during her Europe Tour. In the last 30 years Madonna has represented the Altered Ego that we all carry within us of wanting to challenge the status quo of society, of doing what others won't, of breaking the rules and social standards, of daring. Not only that, Madonna has been "beaten and criticized" by society due to her acts and this has helped her increase her reptilian positioning, being that she "has received that beating for us". Madonna has created a meaning in our primary brain of DARING, maintained by her continuous TRANSGRESSION of the norms.

Every brand, of each one of your products and various services, and surely that of your company, has to be associated with a powerful meaning unique to its category, which is what we call positioning. The positioning of your brand is the space this occupies in the mind of your client, the meanings to which is associated. McDonald's is not just a fast food restaurant, no, is much more than that. Maybe this is the meaning at the cortex level, but at the limbic level it associated to meanings such as BEING A KID AGAIN. Have you ever noticed? Even as adults we play with food in front us. We get our fingers all messy with the hamburger sauce and then we lick our fingers (with less than that, we would be scolded at home but not at McDonald's). We also scatter French fries everywhere, we add ketchup to them, take them with our fingers and with them we clean the ketchup left on the wrapping paper (if we only did that with a piece of meat in the plate in front of our mother at home she would certainly show a disapproval face). At McDonalds all that is OK. Unconsciously, at a reptilian level, McDonald's means to FILL UP; sure, to fill our bellies and stuff them. When was that last time that you came out of McDonalds without feeling belly full? probably never, because fries and drinks take care of filling you to the very top. That is completely reptilian, instinctive, just as it is for dad or mom to see their children full and

enjoying the games of the site unconsciously feeling: GREAT DADS AND MOMS, sure, they have achieved their roles to perfection.

Innovating is one of the greatest challenges of companies in this new millennium. Few are achieving this, the one that haven't are disappearing, and those that have innovated are growing, absorbing others and filling owner's pockets with money.

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