



POINT OF VIEW

Building a brand with infinite promise

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Bettina Papirio
VP, Engagement
Strategy

A promise is a promise. Whether you make it in your personal life or for your professional organization, promises matter, and breaking them leaves an ugly mark—a bad taste. We're all familiar with the feelings created by a broken promise—disappointment, hurt, and distrust. In the corporate world, breaking the brand promise hurts your customer's trust in your brand and creates a feeling of deception. The larger the scale of the relationship, the harder it is to repair the break. And in today's landscape, promises are spreading exponentially by the megabits per second.

Brand Promises, Then and Now

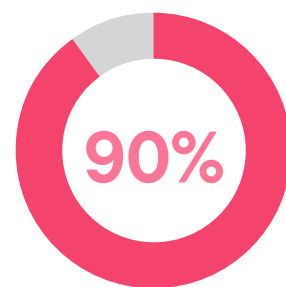
A brand promise connects your company's purpose, market positioning, strategy, and employees to create a unified, consistent customer experience. How potential customers perceive your brand during that experience is where the “value” is created.

Traditionally, brands faced two critical “moments of truth” during which a brand promise was created and kept or broken. First was the moment of purchase, when the consumer makes the final decision to believe your brand promise. The second moment of truth was experiencing and using the chosen product or service. However, digital and social media, mobile connectivity, search engines, and online shopping behaviors have transformed these moments and pushed them way down the line. Google famously identified the ZMOT, or Zero Moment of Truth, some years ago, where the consumer researches a product or brand online before making the purchasing decision.¹ Today, we are well beyond even the zero moment of truth, and brands have to create and deliver on the value through experience in new and diverse ways.

To increase the chances of your brand to deliver on its promise throughout the customer experience, and lead the customer to purchase, the brand genuinely needs to deliver on value consistently. How do you approach this momentous task best? It doesn't have to be hard, and through a consistent effort to anticipate, plan, and follow-through, you can deliver on the expectations and your brand promise.

1. Anticipate and prepare

Before customers go online and research products or services, there is a moment when something happens in their lives that sparks wonder. This is the “Less than Zero Moment of Truth”: the moment when customers have a problem but are not aware of it yet. Your brand must plant the idea of what it offers, how it's different, and how it solves their needs before they are actively searching. This is about more than considering how they will look for your brand, but envisioning their



90% of people have switched companies or seriously considered switching companies after experiencing a broken promise.



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entire human experience—the happenstances, curiosities, and subconscious behaviors that might get them to experience your brand.

To create awareness during Less than Zero Moments of Truth, you will require:

- Data on who your targeted audience is
- Data on which channels they hang out in the most
- A psychological and behavioral customer experience map
- Content that fits with the search intent at the awareness stage

2. Plan for micro-moments

Each micro-moment is a moment of success or failure for your brand promise and the value you create. To minimize the opportunities for failure:

- **Identify each micro-moment:** Create a dynamic customer journey, starting from going online with potential searches to consuming everything that comes along the way. Note every moment that takes place—good and bad. Figure out ways to integrate your brand. Many research methodologies can be useful in this endeavor—from quantitative research to ethnography to focus groups.
- **Answer the questions that customers ask:** Work on discovering all the questions those potential customers may ask and answer them in every possible way. It is especially important here to consider the negative questions they might ask—the pain points they are trying to avoid.
- **Adopt the PESO model of communication:**
 - Paid advertisements: Google ads or social media ads
 - Earned content: Winning online reviews, coverage, and social media buzz
 - Shared content: Natural brand mentions, like people sharing your stories by word of mouth
 - Owned content: Creating your own content to promote your brand

3. Follow through...and follow through

The challenge remains to deliver on excellent customer experience and value when the decision to purchase your product or services has long passed—during the anticipation of arrival, during unboxing, the first use, and every contact with the brand thereafter. Your goal needs to be to build a strong relationship and bond to build loyalty. It might seem that much of this experience is out of your brand's control, but a well-structured content strategy that meets the consumer's needs here can ensure value. Hit on these three key facets:

- **Create content that answers questions:** Every piece of content that you create on your digital marketing channels must fit into this category. If it's not helping anyone, then you shouldn't waste your time on it. But if you are answering a question, invest in being the best resource you can be.
- **Create content that's easy to find:** If your content can't be found on search engines, social media, or the email inboxes of your leads, it might as well not exist at all. When searching online, users usually go with the first few results, so you must optimize your content and use a variety of distribution tools to deliver it to your audience.
- **Provide value-added content:** Sometimes the most important thing to deliver on your brand promise is to show that it's not all about you, but that you understand your customer's lifestyle and aspirations and that you are willing to put those first. Value-added content that goes beyond the product helps customers realize that themselves, and they'll love your brand for it.



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When a brand follows through with its promises, a loyal and proud customer base will rise up, tell friend after friend, and drive exponential growth for the brand. If a brand breaks its promises, it not only lets down its customers, but it breaks their emotional connection—breeding feelings of disrespect, frustration, and anger. As a result, they'll not only stop the relationship, they'll tell friend after friend, and thanks to the virality of digital communications, the damage can continue to fracture for years to come, if not addressed appropriately. In this dynamic, it is worth noting that the feelings created by the breaking of trust are much stronger and longer-lasting than most brands realize.

If you think it's time to clarify your brand promise or audit how it is experienced by your customers, I encourage you to contact business@evokegroup.com. It will require a commitment of time and thought, but in an age when physical time and space no longer constrain the impacts of a brand, it is imperative to build a brand with a strong promise that delivers.