

The Blueprint for Building a Global Brand

Nov 10, 2009 1:52 PM, By Marc de Swaan Arons

Marketing as a discipline has been rocked by many trends and changes in the past few decades. One of the more subtle, yet increasingly powerful, is the shift in how companies are focusing on marketing effectiveness and organizing around fewer—but more global—brands.

Just what *is* a global brand? Think of Unilever's Dove. Years ago, it was known best in the U.S. not as soap, but as a beauty bar, one quarter of which was cleansing cream. Today, via its "Campaign for Real Beauty," Dove is known around the world as brand committed to making women feel beautiful ... and sells a lot of soap bars doing it. The company has dramatically improved innovation focus, its speed to market, and its ability to leverage marketing efficiencies across markets.

Leading an organization with global brands such as Unilever's Dove, Sony Ericsson's mobile phones or Coors Light presents a new set of challenges to the top marketers, from leadership to organizational structure. It isn't easy to "unlock" brand value. Success requires insights, skills and competencies that many marketing leaders simply have not been trained in or exposed to. But it is possible to get it right. You need to build the ultimate marketing machine.

What do you need to do to ensure your company's global marketing effectiveness? **Connect, inspire, focus, organize and build.**



CONNECT: *Building interdependence.*

Succeeding globally requires ensuring that *all* players share a common understanding of the market realities at both local and global levels.

Connecting is about building trust and an interdependent mindset. Key local teams need to know that their market’s success is what drives the global team’s work. Global teams want to see that looking for similarities, rather than differences, is the

prevailing mindset among local marketers.

Jennifer Davidson, Coors Light global marketing leader, was recently charged with bringing together the company’s first global brand team, developing the first global growth strategy, and connecting previously autonomous regional marketers. Coors Light is Molson Coors’ first brand ever to be assigned a dedicated global brand team. Her solution was to align all Molson Coors’ marketers and their ad agency counterparts behind the brand’s growth vision. The new global leadership team streamlined the number of initiatives being worked on, and institutionalized the regular updates and key performance indicators they chose to monitor.

INSPIRE: *Energize passion around the brand.*

Behind every successful global brand is the gem of a universal insight that both attracts consumers and also inspires all who work with the brand. Effective leaders of global brands instinctively understand the importance of igniting passion for the brand internally. These chiefs strive to ensure that the passion is nurtured, which in turn powers the brand’s growth.

Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty did just that. Unilever’s research unearthed a stunning finding: only 2 percent of women in the world felt comfortable saying

they were beautiful. Even young girls felt fat. From that insight, Silvia Lagnado, the Unilever executive responsible for building the Dove brand globally, and her team derived the importance of building women's self-esteem, and embraced it as their mission to forge a stronger emotional bond between the Dove brand and consumers everywhere.

Lagnado successfully united and mobilized the organization around the mission by communicating smartly with a variety of tools: conferences, Web chats, newsletters and personal interactions. Rather than "sell" her vision for the brand too much, she employed what we call global marketing "servant leadership." This combines a genuine in-depth focus on key markets and concern for addressing local marketers' needs with very clear communication of the non-negotiable global brand direction.

FOCUS: Set global brand priorities that win big.

Vigilant focus on and commitment to an agreed-upon set of global brand priorities are crucial to the success of a global brand. The new Coors Light global leadership team has focused consolidating big marketing initiatives and developing a one-page global brand strategy that clarifies the brand vision, mission and strategy.

ORGANIZE: Clarify and enforce roles and responsibilities.

The greatest pitfall that the companies we have studied struggle with is failing to clarify roles and responsibilities early on. Defining the operating model and roles on key decisions is important; even more crucial is enforcing the model and required behaviors. When behaviors inconsistent with the new operating model are tolerated, particularly among leaders, the result is significant delay and frustration.

Over the last year, handset manufacturer Sony Ericsson has rigorously reorganized its global marketing organization to focus on accelerating growth and global marketing efficiencies. Like Sony Ericsson, many global brands are shifting innovation and communication platform development responsibilities away from local (i.e., the countries) and into global brand teams. The consistency, cost and speed arguments for this are strong.

Companies can often cut staff levels and increase the local team's focus on market activation. Sadly, these local marketers who are arguably in the most challenging and exciting changing marketing environment (social media, new channels, etc) often receive far too little support, training and recognition for their work on the new battlefield.

BUILD: *Harvesting and leveraging brand expertise*

Global marketing growth and efficiencies are accelerated when the company's marketers everywhere speak one common marketing language and quickly build on each other's successes and mistakes. How to do that? Cultivate a community of marketing excellence within the company that enables marketers to share success and failure, and quickly adapt and apply lessons learned. Leaders must reinforce this by rewarding the right behaviors and putting the enablers in place to facilitate the required information flow and change.

Lagnado's global Dove team worked closely with Unilever's marketing knowledge management group to create the Dove Planet, a brand intranet that addresses all significant brand questions and provides in-depth experience, results and guidelines.

Without question, Lagnado did something right: When archrival P&G's CMO was asked to identify the competitor he most respected, he focused on the significant global growth of Dove and the Real Beauty campaign. Her work resulted in extraordinary international growth for the brands and clearly demonstrates the importance of adopting building an optimal marketing machine, led by a global marketing CEO. Can you afford not to?

Marc de Swaan Arons is chairman of EffectiveBrands.