

instincts

Instincts is a monthly publication on branding for clients, associates and friends.

Leading and inspiring all those who touch the enterprise
to understand, embrace and enhance the power of your brand.

Losing ground.

It's a sad week for the Great Grandfathers Ford and Sleeman.

Great brands are built with a unique position and consistency - educating, refreshing and steadfastly defending that position.

There are 235 different makes and models of cars marketed in Canada. Ask just about anyone and they can easily tell you what differentiates Volvo: safety. BMW: performance. Honda: friendly. Kia: low price. Ask those same people about a Ford and they are at a loss for the word. Ford simply got too big and the old friends inside forgot they had to make cars people wanted. Needless to say, their market share has dipped way below their once 100%.



At the same time, there are just about as many beers in Canada as cars. When John Sleeman decided to revive his family's brewery a number of years ago, Molson and Labatt together had just about 100% of the market. With his tenacity, unique family heritage position and consistency in everything they said and did, Sleeman carved off a serious piece of the market. But then John got busy with the financial side of the business and his new friends inside the company began to change the company's position little by little.

Last week, Bill Ford announced plant closings, countless layoffs and a need to build cheaper cars that people want. The next day, John Sleeman announced a profit warning and a need to follow the buck-a-beer guys down in price.

During the same week, BMW announced record sales and profits of their premium priced vehicles while Steam Whistle Brewery continues to rack up double digit growth with their premium priced beer.

What would brand coach suggest?

There is a lesson to be learned about having the courage to stand by and stick with your unique position. Don't stagnate - keep it fresh, evolve it and shift with your market but never abandon or jump on the next bandwagon going by. By staying consistent, you'll entrench your brand in the minds of your customers and target, and remind them at each interaction of what you stand for. This approach will also keep your costs in check and your internal team aligned as you work to continually deepen the brand within the core of your company, rather than introducing a new campaign and slogan every quarter.

C'mon boys, stick to stories about Great Grandpa!