

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.

Off-brand behavior.

Many people who receive this newsletter - consistently, the first Wednesday of every month - signed up for it after hearing me coaching at a corporate session or maybe speaking at a more public Branding event. And these folks may recall me referencing Volvo as a great example of a company who has carved off a very key positioning in the crowded car market - SAFETY - and they defend it at every turn. They are one of my Branding heroes. Volvo *For life*.



But they screwed up!

The wife of a colleague of mine had an unfortunate accident last summer and rolled their family van with their new baby in the back seat. All were properly strapped in, and other than bruises and the terror associated with this type of event, they were ok. But the unnerving experience led the family to go right out and purchase a Volvo.

The car has had a few mechanical issues. However, my friend still compliments them on their attentive and concerned service. This past week he was in the dealership with the car again and the Volvo folks, trying to make amends

(good intent) presented him with a very expensive gift - a large mechanical cork-screw (bad outcome). Now let me point out, it did say "please don't drink and drive" on the Volvo-branded box, but did I mention it was a cork screw?

We all know or have a sense of the horrible tragedy impaired driving inflicts on our society. Why would a company who has devoted over 40 years to driving safety, and has been responsible for virtually every safety feature innovation on every automobile today, come even this close to associating their name with alcohol?

What would brand coach suggest?

This bad decision is the result of 'old friends' - like people inside Coca Cola who may tire of receiving or giving another RED shirt, the friends at Energizer who have come to hate anything to do with Bunnies, the long -term employees at Maytag who will scream if one more person calls them 'ol' lonely' and the people at the Volvo Dealer who just couldn't bring themselves to give another travel First Aid kit.

Your brand is what people think of you. And what they think is made up of everything the company says and does. Great Brand companies watch and control all the details including the message that premiums or gifts halo onto their Brand. Consistency is the only thing that builds Brands.

Friends, bite your lip, be consistent!