

# 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.

## Brand is a reflection of a culture.

As I write this, those flying nemeses Air Canada and WestJet are back in the news settling their industrial espionage case with an apology from Clive Beddoe to Robert Milton, along with legal expenses and a token fine paid to charity.

While the original charge was way out of character for WestJet, the late, but straight up apology was certainly on character, witness the following examples...



On an Air Canada flight to Montreal a few months ago, my Instinct partner experienced a hard landing of such magnitude as to force the breath out of everyone aboard and to tear a heavy, seven-foot piece of trim from the overhead luggage rack, which came crashing to the floor. Nothing was acknowledged by the cabin crew, nothing was said on the announcement system outside of the usual official drivel and the deservedly embarrassed pilots hid behind a closed cockpit door as the shaken and grumbling passengers exited.

A month later, while flying into Florida on WestJet this time, my partner experienced a similarly hard landing whereupon the WestJet cabin crew chose to openly deal with the obvious. Their announcement went something like this: "Welcome to Fort Myers, we have landed on runway 12, while you'll find your luggage on runway 13." The passengers broke into laughter and applause and as they exited in good humor, the red-faced pilot was at the

cabin door to say his good byes and take his licks.

## What would brand coach suggest?

*This is a clear demonstration of the extreme cultural differences that exist between the two competitors. Air Canada's reaction illustrates their long-standing monopolistic attitude of entitlement. WestJet's open approach illustrates their respect and desire to build a long-term relationship with their customers.*

*Brand is about culture and the culture of an organization must be lead by the CEO - CBO (Chief Brand Officer). As touted in their recent advertising, Westletters (their word for employees) are also owners, recognizing that it is experiences - not advertising promises - that build brands today.*

*Their overzealous competitive offense will be paid for with a big chunk of Brand Equity drawn from the enormous equity account they hold with their stakeholders. But, this WestJet legal issue will be long forgotten when Air Canada inevitably lands their very last flight.*