

# instincts

instincts is a monthly publication on Branding for clients, associates and friends.

Our Mission: Support and challenge business leaders to maximize the potential within their Brand.



## Does your Cinderella smoke?

Imagine this radio ad about a DieHard car battery, recently heard on U.S. radio: on a sub-zero day, the positive and negative terminals are debating how tough their start is going to be. The positive terminal is optimistic, saying "let's get started!" But the negative terminal responds: "I'm freezing my bolts off!!"

This punch line's double meaning can be funny stuff in the right company. No doubt it was a knee-slapper with the 20-something creative team who wrote it. In the hierarchy of ads these hipsters want to work on, spots for car batteries are down there with, say, hemorrhoid cream. To make it more fun for themselves, they inject some locker room humour.

Thinking that Instinct has lost its sense of fun? Well, imagine this: walking around a corner at Disney World with your 6-year-old daughter and finding Cinderella having a cigarette.

This is not about  
humourless moralizing.

It's all about a Brand's *character*, that key element of the Brand Foundation we define as *our voice; how we act*. Cinderella's smoking obviously doesn't fit with Disney's wholesome and child-friendly character. And "freezing my bolts off" doesn't fit with Sears, whose family-directed mission is to "provide services, products and solutions that earn trust and build lifetime relationships."

This is not about humourless moralizing. A Brand's character doesn't have to be prim and proper, just true to its overall Brand Foundation.

## What does the Brand Coach coach?

Ask yourself: does your Cinderella smoke?

The CEO must coach the team to refer to the Brand Foundation always. Especially for every public-facing decision, radio ads included. To do otherwise is to risk decisions being made far from the executive suite – as with the DieHard product manager who bought the radio ad – that present the wrong image.

Sears has some of the strongest private label Brands in the United States: Craftsman tools, Kenmore appliances and DieHard car batteries, to name a few. But the overall Sears Brand is struggling to make itself relevant again with American families. It needs to focus.



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"Brand: It Ain't the Logo\* should be required reading for anyone who sits around the 'big table' and for anyone who seeks to influence their decisions."

Ken Wong  
Associate Professor, Business  
and Marketing Strategy  
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