



# BRAND & DELIVER

NOVEMBER 2015

**Having just been through the exercise of refreshing and realigning a brand, and launching a new website at Collas Crill, it prompted the age old debate about the value of brand.**

To the cynic, brand is often seen as nothing more than a logo, a slogan or a colour. Yet, even if a business has none of these things, it doesn't mean it doesn't have a brand. A brand is our promise to our clients. What we actually deliver must live up to the promise we're making, or our whole proposition will fail. The promise we make permeates everything we do because what sits behind are the mechanisms to make sure we deliver against it, often a complex organisational and operational framework, which is ultimately designed to drive profitability, deliver healthy ROIs and maximise returns. It is also why having a strong set of corporate values and consistent culture, to reinforce behaviours within the organisational and operational framework, is so important. Everything you do within that framework influences perception of your brand.

Whether consciously or subconsciously, clients know when there is an inconsistency between our promise and what-and-how we actually deliver. They'll soon let you know if you are not living up to your promise, and they'll either tell you outright or let their feet do the talking for them. Where we miss the mark we need to listen and learn from our clients, understand where we are going wrong and put plans in place to fix the issue. Some may be easy fixes, others may be longer-term cultural issues, which require significant organisational change – either way, you can't fool your clients for long. We shouldn't be afraid to listen – *always listen!* – to our clients and ask them how we're doing (certainly, finding out there is an issue - as they are walking away is leaving it a little late!).

Understanding client engagement, interactions and brand awareness are vital to the healthy performance of any business, as such on-going client feedback and client surveys help keep us on track by identifying inconsistencies and misalignments, especially if our clients' needs and expectations change over time. It'll help your brand and your promise to stay honest and real.

What's more, when a level of organisational alignment is achieved (easier to say than do), there is a much clearer and more obvious path between the logo on the front of your building or at the top of your stationery, to your top-line revenue or the bottom-line profits. Where it's not so obvious, you clearly have work to do – if you don't know what you are, or what you want to represent, then it's unlikely your clients will either. Are you living up to your promise?

At Collas Crill we have always been clear about the kind of firm we want to be and how we want to be perceived. Our brand has always sought to convey these messages. We spend a lot of time listening to our clients to make sure we are living up to our promises

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" We've made a promise to

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and that our core values are consistent with what they say about us. We focused on key things such as what clients like about us and what they believe sets us apart from our competitors. In doing this I believe we've built an honest brand which reflects the values, personality and character of our firm and, importantly, the people who work here. We've made a promise to our clients about the kind of firm we are, now its our job to make sure we deliver against it.

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Even though Collas Crill is a law firm, we recognise that our success is not just about our professional expertise and legal skill – that's pretty much a given for a law firm. What they do is one thing, but how they deliver it is another. It's about ensuring our people, whether they are lawyers or not, live up to a certain set of standards and behaviours: these are our values and they underpin our organisational culture. It's also about ensuring that we have the right organisational and operational framework in place to support this. This is an exercise in constant improvement to ensure we're both internally aligned in all respects, and also in step with what our clients want and need externally.

It takes time and effort to get right, and it would be complacent and arrogant to say we're 100% there, but it's because we do these things that we believe our brand has always stood apart from competitors and pushed the boundaries – it expresses our personality, not only in the logo and brand colours, but in everything we do. We've never been afraid to say we enjoy what we do and have fun with the brand either, because it shows that we're real people who are approachable and easy to do business with. Our clients even tell us they enjoy working with us because of this. It was important that we continued to develop a brand that reflected this.

Having both worked at the brand end and the financial ends of businesses, and everywhere in between, I find it difficult to disconnect the various elements of an organisation's make up. Nothing exists in isolation, everything should be there for a reason; everything should support, drive or influence something else. If it doesn't, why the hell is it there? What's it for? What's it doing? Misalignment means underperformance and inconsistency. While that's not quite the McKinsey 7-S model in nutshell (perhaps just a small part of it, but you've gotta start somewhere!), it does bring me back to brand. Don't underestimate its importance or value to your business, or rather, don't underestimate the importance of your business to the value of your brand.

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