

STRCUU COMMUNICATION TRAINING ON: CONTENT CREATION, PERSONAL BRANDING, AND NETWORKING

These notes were compiled by Dr Zadok Opero Ekimwere who participated in the three-day training as a supplementary resource to the training. His contact is: ekimwere2014@gmail.com

Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/4coUQJU>

1. Introduction:

The three-day Training was Hands-on and Experiential which largely achieved its objectives. These Supplementary Notes situate this Training in the broad contextual Branding and Marketing Framework. They provide theoretical and analytical frameworks for navigating Branding in content creation, personal branding and differentiation for effective collaboration and networking at various levels. From the broad context, the Notes zero in on branding in organisations down to personal branding.

As we peruse through the notes it is important to bear in mind the following questions that guide us:

- I. How can we effectively use Differentiation:
 - a) In Audience Segmentation?
 - b) In Product/Service performance improvement?
 - c) Enable one gain a competitive advantage as a professional?
 - d) Content creation and messaging?
- II. How can we apply Benchmarking:
 - a) To improve our Product/Service?
 - b) To improve our Business or Professional Track?
 - c) To improve our collaborative and network paths?
 - d) To create adorable personas?

2. These Notes Aim to:

-) Make You Understand What a Brand is
-) Clarify the Difference Between Brand and Branding
-) Make You Understand Why Brand Analysis is Critical
 - o in Content Creation and Messaging
-) Balance Hands-on/Experiential Learning and Theory
-) Explain Why Branding is Important in Collaboration and Networking
-) Explain Why Benchmarking is Important in Branding
-) Blend Hands-on Experiential Learning and Theory
-) Make you Differentiate Various Audiences and Communication Platforms

3. What is a Brand?

What makes you stand out, such as:

- Identity, colour, name, logo, symbol or design that define products and services
- Intangible, collective perception, reputation, and “gut feeling” (instant) a customer has about a company, product, or service.
- A strategic identity built through content experiences, values, and messaging that distinguishes one seller from another, and shaping how audiences perceive them.

4. Why look unique? Why differentiate?

- To be easily recognized
- To be appreciated
- To be easily chosen
- To take advantage of other brands/competitors
- To traverse a stellar personal professional journey
- To grow loyalty
- To make profits

5. Key Branding Elements

- Visual identity:
Comprises of logo, design, company name, colour and website
- Messaging:
How a company crafts its messages e.g. *We lead others follow*
- Value proposition:
Emphasises unique value proposition.
What makes the product/service stand out
- Brand story:
Who started your business and why?

6. Difference Between Brand and Branding

- Brand – The result: The reputation and perception in the customer’s mind
Personal Brand – An Identity
A personal brand is the intentional, unique story and reputation you build by showcasing your expertise, values, and personality to the world both online and offline. It acts as a professional calling card, differentiating you to attract opportunities, build trust, and establish authority in your field
- Branding – The process: The active, deliberate actions taken to shape the perceptions such as marketing, design and customer service
Personal Branding - Process
Personal Branding is marketing yourself as an individual. It is about highlighting your unique qualities, skills, and experiences that set you apart from the others. What makes you stand out as unique and exceptional as a person or professional. This type of branding evolves around who you are, what you stand for, and how you want to be perceived.

7. Key Components of Personal Branding

- J Authenticity: Project and reflect your true self: values, passions and beliefs
- J Consistency: Across all platforms, situations and environments
- J Visibility: Be active in your professional community, social media etc
- J Emotional connection: Connect and resonate with the end user audience; be relatable and trustworthy.

8. Brand Types

- a) Brand Marketing:
The approach used by companies to promote and establish a brand in a market
By creating a unique identity, values, and perceptions that differentiate from competitors
- b) Corporate Branding
The process of establishing and managing a corporate or organisation's identity.
It involves crafting the company's mission, values, and culture which align with its public image. Corporate identity aims to create a consistent and positive company perception among its stakeholders including customers, employees, investors and the public.
- c) Brand Equity
Value of a company in a customer's mind
- d) Personal Branding
The act/process of promoting yourself as a brand by crafting a distinct identity, reputation, and online presence to showcase your skills, expertise and personality

9. Brand Analysis

As communication experts, it is necessary for us to keep abreast with the behavior of the marketplace and how our brand is performing against other competitors. This can be done through Brand Analysis.

Brand analysis is an in-depth evaluation of a brand's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), examining its market position, competitive landscape and customer perception. It aims to align brand identity with audience expectations to improve loyalty, boost financial performance (e.g., higher premium pricing), and strengthen market presence.

Although this Brand Analysis is at the broader level, the same approach and principle can also be applied to analyse Personal Brand.

10. Key Brand Analysis Components:

Internal and External Review:

Auditing internal brand values, mission, and visual identity (logos, colors) against external customer perception.

Competitive Analysis:

An assessment of your competitor's products, services, sales/marketing tactics, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses relative to your own. Evaluating competitors' products, messaging, and market share to identify differentiation opportunities.

Customer Insights:

Having a deeper understanding of your customers, their behaviours, preferences and needs. Analyzing audience needs, behaviors, and sentiments to enhance the emotional connection to the brand.

Touchpoint Assessment:

Evaluating brand consistency across all channels, including social media, website, and physical products.

11. Frameworks for Brand Analysis are:

The 5 A's:

Emphasis on: Awareness, Authority, Authenticity, Appearance, and Audience.

The 4 C's:

Clarity, Consistency, Content, and Communication.

Three-Dimensional Framework:

Brand Appeal (trustworthiness), Differentiation (unique value), and Recognition (industry visibility).

Conduct a SWOT Analysis:

Determine your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in your professional field or organization.

Audit Your Online Presence:

Google yourself to see what others see.

Define Your Brand Narrative:

Craft a clear, concise story about who you are and the value you provide.

Solicit Feedback:

Ask colleagues or mentors for honest input on how your personal brand is currently perceived

12. What is Differentiation in Marketing?

Differentiation in marketing is the process of distinguishing a product or service from competitors in order to make it more attractive to a target audience. Highlighting unique features, superior quality or exceptional services enable businesses build strong brand loyalty and create a competitive advantage.

Product differentiation is a marketing strategy that highlights a product's unique features, quality or branding to make it stand out from competitors.

It convinces consumers that the product/service is superior or distinct, thereby helping to build brand loyalty, to justify higher prices and increased market share.

13. How to Differentiate Audiences

Audience is not Homogeneous entity, but complex and Heterogeneous. Therefore, to identify or create their exact personas, differentiation strategy is a useful tool to employ.

First: The difference between Audience and Target Audience

- a) Audience refers to all possible customers for a brand, product or service
- b) A Target Audience is a more specific group the brand is actively communicating with for a specific purpose, say in sales promotion, product launch or new marketing campaign strategy

A Targeted Audience is segmented based on:

-) Demographics: age, gender, income, education
-) Psychographics: lifestyle, values, interests
-) Behavior: spending habits, brand loyalty, product usage
-) Geographics: location, climate, urban vs rural

14. Audience Analysis:

Is the systematic process of researching and understanding and audience's demographics, psychographics, attitudes, and needs to tailor communication, speeches or marketing strategies for maximum effectiveness. It ensures messages are relevant, engaging, and persuasive by aligning content with audience's knowledge level, interests, and beliefs through differentiation

15. Key Aspects of Product Differentiation:

-) Purpose: The primary goal is to shift customer focus away from price and toward unique value, making the product a preferred choice.
-) Unique Selling Proposition (USP): It creates a distinct identity for a product based on specific factors that make it different from competitors.

16. Differentiation Strategies

A differentiation strategy makes a brand or product unique, thus creating a distinct competitive advantage and reason for customers to choose it over other competitors. By focusing on superior product attributes, brand image, or specialised services, companies can command higher prices and build strong customer loyalty rather than competing on price alone. Examples of strategies:

-) Product Differentiation: Focusing on unique features, superior technology, performance, design, or quality.
-) Service Differentiation: Offering superior customer service, faster delivery, or better support

-) **Distribution Differentiation:** Gaining a competitive edge through channel coverage, such as exclusive, direct-to-consumer, or highly accessible locations.

17. Key Aspects of Differentiation

-) **Product Differentiation:** Involves adding unique features, improving performance, or enhancing design to make the product stand out.
-) **Vertical Differentiation:** Consumers rank products based on objective, measurable factors like price or quality. For example, one product is clearly seen as higher quality than another.
-) **Horizontal Differentiation:** Consumers choose based on subjective personal preferences, such as color, style, or taste, rather than objective quality.⁸
-) **Mixed Differentiation:** Combines both, where consumers evaluate both objective metrics (e.g., fuel efficiency) and subjective preferences (e.g., car design)

18. Benchmarking in Marketing

You cannot determine your professional worthiness or product/service rating without making a comparison or benchmarking with the others. Benchmarking in marketing is the process of measuring a company's marketing performance, strategies, and key performance indicators (KPIs) against competitors, industry standards, or internal historical data.

Benchmarking helps in identifying gaps in performance, set realistic growth goals, and uncover best practices to improve competitiveness.

In Business Benchmarking means measuring your company's quality, performance and growth by analyzing the processes and procedures of others. This enables the organisation or company determine the need for improvement and how.

The ultimate goal of benchmarking is continuous improvement, something all businesses should aim for. Comparing your business to others can help you generate ideas that you can adopt to get ahead.

19. Four types of business benchmarking

Internal benchmarking

Is all about improving your business by comparing it to existing or historical data. Entails comparing organizational departments or different branch locations, to uncover the best, most efficient practices and share them across the company.

Competitive benchmarking

It is about setting certain goals based on what your competitors are doing. If you study the practices and standards of similar businesses to match — or ideally exceed — the industry status quo, your business can gain a competitive edge.

Competitor benchmarks can impact parts of your business like employee salaries, services provided to customers and even employees' morale. "If you want to stay ahead of the competition and create the most desirable work environment for your employees, understanding what your competitors are doing is not only common sense, but imperative," CEO said. "Employees will know they should stay with a company if they have an opportunity for growth — monetary and skill — and they know their employer is keeping up or staying ahead of competition."

Strategic benchmarking

One step beyond competitive benchmarking is strategic benchmarking, in which a business seeks to emulate specific performance standards of world-class organizations. This may involve cross-industry inspiration, like performance to identify growth areas.

Personal Benchmarking

Exists in performance measurements. It serves as a tailored approach to individual personal development. It involves setting up specific metrics based on personal goals and comparing them against team standards, industry best practices or past Internal Benchmarking

20. Key Aspects of Personal Benchmarking

- *Focus on Individual Growth*
Moves beyond organizational metrics to focus on a person's specific skills, behavior and career goals
- *Performance Tracking*
Helps individuals to measure their progress over time, keeping them focused on continuous improvement.
- *Comparison Point*
While it can involve top performers, it primarily acts as a feedback mechanism for identifying where one can improve rather than merely ranking individuals.
- *Tailored Metrics*
Use qualitative and quantitative measures aligned with an individual's unique role and development path