



BlendedThinking

marketing | branding

10 Ways to Stay "On Strategy & On Brand"SM

1. **Your positioning in the market must be** Relevant, Credible, Differentiated and Sustainable.
2. **Effective messaging** is: (1) Clear (2) Concise (3) Consistent and (4) Compelling
3. **Brand Brief.** Develop a Brand Brief or summary that includes: (1) Who your customer(s) is; (2) What they currently think about your offer; (3) What you want them to think about your offer; (4) What your offer does for them – its *benefit to them*; (5) How you or your offer does what you promise – the *Reasons to Believe*, and; (6) what kind of Personality your brand has.
4. **Put Creatives in a well-informed box:** *Good* creative talent appreciates the boundaries imposed on them by a well-informed Brand Brief. It actually makes their job *easier*. If your agency or freelancer disagrees, I suggest you *don't use them*.
5. **It's not about you.** What *you* think may not be what's most important. But what *your customer* thinks is. Or in the case of B2B, what *your customer's customer* thinks. Consider everything from *their* perspective and ask if the creative solutions offered *answer the Brand Brief*.
6. **Listen to your gut.** That first "thin slice" reaction to your or anyone else's message is often the best gauge of its effectiveness. Make note of it *before* your brain kicks in and you over intellectualize your reaction.
7. **Uncomfortable is good.** Good creative work will often make you a little uncomfortable. Apple's infamous first commercial almost didn't air! But if it scares you to death – then it might be a bit over the top.
8. **Tell the same story.** Everyone in your company should tell more or less the same story when asked, "So, what does your company do?" If they don't, give them the story to tell. If you can't, perhaps you need some help.
9. **The "So What?" test.** If your company's story leaves people wondering, "So what? How does that help me?" then it's not a very powerful or effective story. Keep working on it.
10. **What are they up to?** Know *what* your competition is saying and *how* they're saying it. Visit their Web site, mystery shop or call them, subscribe to their newsletter, etc. Surround yourself with *their* messaging and keep it up to date in comparison to your own.

Thomas Holownia, Principal & Founder of Blended Thinking, is passionate about defining and articulating brands. Clients even adopt his, "On strategy. On brand."SM mantra in their ongoing marketing and branding efforts!

Tom is a Kellogg MBA who's been both a Fortune 500 client and a consultant to brands large and small like: Charles Schwab, Nortel Networks, Accenture, Colgate-Palmolive and InSound Medical.