

Take care when hitching customers' emotions to your brandwagon

By [Estelle Nagel](#)

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"Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything."



© [Colin Kaepernick Twitter](#).

The powerful words of Colin Kaepernick, the NFL quarterback who controversially protested against police brutality in America by refusing to stand during the national anthem, used by Nike in an advertising campaign.

Nike recently celebrated thirty years of their legendary 'Just Do it' slogan with an ad using Kaepernick, Serena Williams and a slew of other inspirational athletes talking about the power of self-esteem and belief. What's remarkable is that at no point during the commercial did anyone mention their preference for Nike.



#FairnessFirst: How Nike inspires others to 'just do it' with commodity activism

Leigh Andrews 17 Sep 2018



They didn't draw comparisons between Nike and its competitors. They didn't talk about the soles, the weight, the structure, the quality. But they sold the hell out of those shoes. That's the raw power of hitching the brandwagon to customers' beliefs, feelings and aspirations rather than competing on features or price.

Know your customers' aspirations, values, their language

It's not a new concept at all – Steve Jobs decades ago was tying the Apple brand to consumer emotions. Even today, when many electronics' brands have significantly narrowed the quality and features gap between their own products and that of Apple, there are still crowds sleeping in front of iStores when a new model launches. The marketing (and the product) has made us feel something when we're holding the latest iPhone in our hands that we simply don't feel with other brands.

What would Steve Jobs do?



Aki Kalliatakis 3 Mar 2016



After the Nike Kaepernick advert aired, Twitter exploded with angry tweets featuring customers burning their Nikes or cutting the Nike swoosh from their socks – a little bit silly, if you consider that these customers are spiting the brand by burning items that they've already purchased. Diving into such an intensely politicised space was a risk for Nike but one that the brand was willing to take. They are not only generated a ton of free publicity but for every person who burned their Nikes, there were others positively drawn to the brand.



Nike's courageous new ad campaign mixing racial politics with sport will be vindicated

Keith Rathbone 6 Sep 2018



While Nike got it right, others get this kind of thing spectacularly wrong – Pepsi's Kendall Jenner ad being the prime example. If you're going to sell your brand based on your customers' feelings, you have to understand them intimately. You have to know their aspirations, values, their language. You have to move closer to them.



Pepsi drops ad accused of mocking 'Black Lives' protests

6 Apr 2017



You have to start by listening to your customers carefully. Finding out how they relate to your brand both functionally and emotionally.

Then you need to make sure that everything you do with your product works for them.

Know what you stand for

It's vital that you know what you stand for and what your values are. And to make sure every single employee knows, respects and implements their job according to those values. There can't be any gaps.

You have to make sure your intrinsic and extrinsic marketing elements match up. You can't simply tell customers how to feel, you have to engineer it by making sure that all elements – from the branding to the website to the signatures - match the promises and design of your above-the-line marketing.

Lastly, you have to deliver. Too many brands promote their ethics and values and are left red-faced when some of their actions that are contrary to their values are exposed in public.

If a customer ties an emotion to your brand, they're much more loyal and less likely to switch due to functional factors like price increases or shifts in the market. So brands can play on customers' emotions but they should never overplay their hand.

ABOUT ESTELLE NAGEL

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