



Marketing Messages

MARY CHARLESON

Brand building 101

Brand building and positioning is an important part of your marketing strategy. Your brand is the combination of name, words, symbols and design that identifies your product or service and distinguishes it from competitors. Every product, service, location you offer, policy you create, price you set, and action you take honours and builds your brand, or potentially damages it.

Ever hear of **NUVO Magazine**? Few in the magazine or advertising business had 6 years ago. Yet in an industry littered with unsuccessful startups and overlapping lifestyle magazines, Nuvo has successfully branded and positioned themselves as a high quality general interest quarterly national magazine. How did they do it?

Building a brand starts with a precise definition of the target customer group and their needs and expectations. Nuvo targets affluent, well-traveled, highly educated Canadians. *Pasquale Cusano*, magazine Publisher and founder of **Montecristo Jewellers**, felt there was a need in the market for a glossy high-end national luxury magazine that would meet the expectations of this discerning group. The name Nuvo, derived from "Nuovo" means "new" in Italian. Chosen for its simplicity, it evokes mystery, a European flavour and is a symbol of something refreshing, new and different. Positioned as "Inspired by quality" the magazine features editorial content on culture, style and celebrity.

A business must decide which of the benefits it can offer that will give the brand a distinctive position in the marketplace. The simple goal, to focus on quality, has guided every business decision and helped position the Nuvo brand. The product itself exudes quality. Printed oversize on 90lb gloss stock from Germany and perfect bound, the average 144 page magazine lands like a book on the coffee table. This itself sets it apart from other lifestyle magazines. The decision to limit advertising to full page, full colour only and have a 60% editorial and 40% advertising mix makes it distinctive in an industry which typically loads advertising much heavier and chops it up with smaller ads. All editorial is original to Nuvo and covers feature striking artwork by world recognized illustrators and photographers. Distribution, at 50,000 across Canada is highly targeted through direct subscription, delivery to affluent Canadian households and through hotels airline lounges. Ad placement at \$13,000 isn't cheap, but the company has successfully leveraged premium brand advertisers such as **Chanel, Audi, Cartier, and Jaguar**, as an extension of their own brand. Nuvo recently won the Benny Award for the best printed magazine in North America. Clearly the single focus on quality has given their brand a distinctive position.

All marketing, advertising and positioning efforts must fashion an image around the brand that is consistent with the benefits and that will bring excitement and satisfaction to the target group. *Alessandra Bordon*, Director of Sales and Marketing at Nuvo, says simply, "We are in our readers world. One way we do this is by distributing through high-end hotels and airport lounges. We know from research that our readers spend on average 14 nights/year at hotels. They travel extensively." During their early years, Nuvo had an agreement with **The Globe and Mail** newspaper to deliver the magazine to select high-income subscribers. Today, a limited number are delivered to Globe subscribers but the main source is subscriber based and from preferred client lists of advertisers. They believe this last source builds brand loyalty and a strong association with advertisers and their target markets. Nuvo also creates exclusive events, such as a celebrity wine tasting at the **Vancouver International Wine Festival**, and niche events at the **Montreal International Auto Show** and the **Toronto Film Festival** to position their brand.

For Nuvo, building their brand has meant going beyond positioning their product with readers. Although advertising decisions are sometimes made at the business level, in many cases, advertising agencies make the advertising budget decisions for national campaigns. In a world where PMB (Print Measurement Bureau) reports and ROI (return on investment) rule, Nuvo has had a tough battle to establish market share. Meeting the needs and expectations of this customer group may prove their toughest branding challenge. A Canadian Circulations Audit Board (CCAB) distribution audit and marketing research conducted by **Millward Brown Goldfarb** in 2003 has helped lend credibility. And by sponsoring industry events like BC American Marketing Association presentations, they are putting their product in the hands of decision makers. But a national magazine launched in Vancouver by a founder without a publishing background has been a hard sell to Toronto and New York. And when the cost to produce the high quality glossy has exceeded the revenue it produces until recently, as Cusano admits, agencies and competing lifestyle magazines can be excused for questioning its long-term viability. Still, great brands are built on passion, patience and perseverance, and the founders of Nuvo certainly have all three.

So what can you learn from all this? Identify your target group and the distinctive benefits you offer. This is what will define your brand image. Building a brand requires a promise to deliver a consistent set of qualities, standards, values and experiences. Every business decision you make needs to endorse your brand position.

Mary Charleson, MBA is president of Charleson Communications, a company specializing in market research, strategy and advertising development. She writes monthly and can be reached at mary@charleson.ca