FINAL EXAM SELF STUDY QUESTION 2

EXPLAIN DAVIS’S SIX KEY PRINCIPLES OF BRAND ASSIMILATION PROCESS

Internal branding doesn’t always receive as much time, money, or effort as external branding programs receive. But although it may require significant resources, it generates a number of benefits. Internal branding creates a positive and more productive work environment. It can also be a platform for change and help foster an organization’s identity. For example, after employee turnover became too high, Yahoo! created the “What Sucks” program in which employees could send their concerns straight to the CEO. Branding expert Scott Davis offers a number of insights into what it takes to make a brand-driven organization. According to Davis, for employees to become passionate brand advocates, they must understand what a brand is, how it is built, what their organization’s brand stands for, and what their role is in delivering on the brand promise.

Formally, he sees the process of helping an organization’s employees assimilate the brand as three stages: 1. Hear It: How do we best get it into their hands? 2. Believe It: How do we best get it into their heads? 3. Live It: How do we best get it into their hearts?

Davis also argues that six key principles should guide the brand assimilation process within an organization, offering the following examples.

1. Make the brand relevant. Each employee must understand and embrace the brand meaning. Nordstrom, whose brand relies on top-notch customer service, empowers sales associates to approve exchanges without manager approval.

2. Make the brand accessible. Employees must know where they can get brand knowledge and answers to their brand-related questions. Ernst & Young launched “The Branding Zone” on its intranet to provide employees easy access to information about its branding, marketing, and advertising programs.

3. Reinforce the brand continuously. Management must reinforce the brand meaning with employees beyond the initial rollout of an internal branding program. Southwest Airlines continually reinforces its brand promise of “a symbol of freedom” through ongoing programs and activities with a freedom theme.

4. Make brand education an ongoing program. Provide new employees with inspiring and informative training. RitzCarlton ensures that each employee participates in an intensive orientation called “The Gold Standard” that includes principles to improve service delivery and maximize guest satisfaction.

5. Reward on-brand behaviors. An incentive system to reward employees for exceptional support of the brand strategy should coincide with the roll-out of an internal branding program. Prior to its merger with United, Continental Airlines rewarded employees with cash bonuses each month that the airline ranked in the top five of on-time airlines. 6. Align hiring practices. HR and marketing must work together to develop criteria and screening procedures to ensure that new hires are good fits for the company’s brand culture. Pret A Manger sandwich shops has such a carefully honed screener that only 20 percent of applicants end up being hired.