

# One Brand - One Rule

By T. Scott Gross

You've got a great brand. Plenty of equity. Why not spend a little?

Why not? Well, go ahead and spend but only so long as you don't violate the first and only rule of brand extension—honor the values.

On the far edge of my desk, close enough to reach in a moment of emergency day dreaming is the Craftsman tool circular from Sears. Page 63 is dog-eared, a sign that I am waiting for an excuse to call for the 336 piece Mechanics Tool Set plus 6 FREE fully polished wrenches. What's the brand? Craftsman 336 times over.

What's a Craftsman? Incredibly durable shop tools backed by a lifetime guaranty. One brand, 336 mechanics tools.

So long as you don't step on the brand values, extend all you like.

Could Craftsman build a vacuum cleaner? Yes, and they have. But they've built shop vacs, see page 32. Could you use a Craftsman shop vac on carpet? Yes, but perish the thought! Could Craftsman build a carpet vacuum. Yes, but it would violate the values that are Craftsman. Show me a Craftsman carpet vacuum and suddenly my turbo-charged shop vac would look a little wimpy.

Then there was Coke. Actually, Coke wasn't the problem. It was New Coke that violated the values. After decades of telling us that 'Coke is it' and 'Coke is the real thing' someone failed to notice that the value of Coke lies in a unique taste, that "I

can't get this anywhere else" feeling that defines every true brand experience.

Want to extend the line? Diet Coke makes sense. Cherry Coke is alright. Even caffeine-free Coke works. Why? Because each is true to the one value that makes Coke Coke...it tastes like Coke.

And what is it that makes Krispy Kreme a brand worthy of protection? Fresh, hot, and sweet are three values that come to mind. So what would you say to Krispy Kreme dinner rolls? Probably not. Krispy Kreme gravy mix? Definitely not! Just remember, honor the values and you'll be fine.

Ford F-150 brings to mind three key values; authentic, tough, pick-up truck. So long as you honor the values you can do what you want. Ford has.

You can order an F-150 in a thousand permutations but you can't get an F-150 lawn mower or an F-150 station wagon. If you could I'd be looking to trade my old gray ranch truck for something a tad more manly.

When you have a strong brand the best move is not to do anything that would undermine its strength.

On the other hand, if a brand has an attribute that is negative don't wait until it is too late to take action. As I was heading to the office this morning the local news anchor ended the half-hour saying, "When we come back, a former Dallas Cowboy is arrested on drug charges. And it isn't Michael Irvin."

Brands are powerful. Be careful.

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