

# Love and Branding



*By Maritza Zapata, Marketing Director,  
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Earlier in my professional life, I had the great fortune of working for one of the most exciting firms I have ever experienced in my career: desgrippes gobé & associates ('dga'), a global design development and design firm. Marc Gobé, the firm's president, built a solid reputation serving as the face and advocate of 'emotional branding' – a relatively new concept at the time. From him and the firm's partners, I learned the philosophy around how **brands** could truly connect with consumers and create this emotional connection with them. This education has stuck with me since and I'm always in search of tackling how a firm can create long lasting and authentic relationships with clients. How do we stay authentic and connected to those we serve? How do we continuously provide our clients with value? How do we keep our audience informed and provide them with a unique experience not in just the product that we deliver but also in the process?

## **Getting Started**

No surprise – this is one of the most critical aspects of any assignment. Getting started on the right foot – from the contractual agreement to budgeting to staff assignment – is a major contributor to a successful relationship. However, there is a step that is often overlooked – I call it step 1A: the pre-relationship. I am a passionate advocate for due diligence before any business relationship is formed. That means doing

in-depth research; ascertaining the expectations and demands of the client; conducting “chem checks” to ensure positive relationships from the very start. And the question – “What can we do for you beyond what is expected?” – needs to be asked *and* addressed. Knowledge and commitment are givens in any industry; value is the indeterminate, and it’s up to companies to demonstrate their value in ways that ensures that ongoing relationships are formed and that clients keep returning for concepts and ideas that emotionally connect consumers to their brands in fresh and surprising ways.

### **Play Nice in the Sandbox**

I work with a team of terrific designers who care very much about the clients and the projects in which they work. They are invested in getting to the heart of the challenge and delivering a final product that is beautiful and strategically on target. Now, like all things, some challenges are easier to tackle than others. Our clients and our firm rely on each other for knowledge sharing and it’s our job to love and defend a solution but never at the risk of making a client feel unheard or alienated from the process. As good as our ideas maybe, they are at their best when we create a strong collaboration with our clients to deliver an amazing design solution. Knowing that our clients understand this about our process makes it another terrific differentiator for our brand. While most boast about having a collaborative spirit, our firm holds collaboration at core of who we are.

### **Engage and Connect**

Emotional branding should engage and connect. When the collective group stands together and holds brand tenets close to heart and activates them in their daily work lives to deliver something unique and memorable...great things starts to happen. When clients know and feel they are listened to and not spoken to...amazing things start to happen. This is how it happens. Through the commitment of offering something unique, something that people feel passionate about, and helping

clients, truly helping them solve business issues, people become attached to you as a brand. Ultimately, it all has to be authentic, the commitment has to be collective, and the passion has to come from within.

By following – and living by – these principles, I have seen how brands succeed by connecting with their audience. The steps are involved and often take additional time. But with that extra efforts comes a deeper reward, and it is time well-spent.

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