

So What

Has anyone ever made you a promise? What was it? Maybe your sister promised she'd take you to the movies this weekend, or your classmate promised he'd have his portion of the history project completed by Friday. These promises are easy to identify and understand. But, could you determine the promises that have been made to you by Mountain Dew or Google? You're probably thinking, "What? Those companies haven't promised me anything." Well, actually, they have!

Successful companies make promises to their customers, though they don't always live up to them. Instead, you learn about a company through your experiences with that company over time. Mountain Dew promises to be the perfect refreshment for customers who lead fun, active lifestyles. Google promises its users the ability to search the world's information and find exactly what they're looking for—fast. What have some other brands promised you and their other customers?

Delivering on a company's brand promise doesn't happen by accident. It requires focus and support from every employee. Read on to learn more about the power of brand promise and how you can help your business succeed in keeping it.

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Do You Promise?

Before you can understand brand promise, you must understand what a brand itself is. A **brand** is all the combined impressions and experiences associated with a particular company, good, or service. Some of today's most popular and recognizable brands are:

- Apple
- Disney
- Amazon
- Coca-Cola
- Starbucks



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▲ *Starbucks is one of today's most recognizable brands.*

In touch

Now you know what brand promise is and why it's important. Next, let's learn how a business communicates this promise to its customers and potential customers. As you know, this task isn't typically accomplished using words. Rather, businesses use touch points to get the message across.

A **touch point** is any interaction between a business and a customer or potential customer. For any given brand, there may be hundreds of potential touch points. Of course, not every customer will experience every touch point. The sum of the touch points that a customer *does* experience becomes the company's communication of its brand promise.

Let's take a closer look at some of the touch points that companies use to convey brand promise.

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Before doing business with the company. There are many touch points that occur before a customer and a business "meet" for the first time. Examples of these touch points include:

- **Advertisements** (TV, radio, Internet, newspaper, magazine, billboards, flyers, direct mail, etc.)
- **Publicity** (unsponsored mentions of the brand or business in the news)
- **Word-of-mouth marketing** (what other customers are saying)



▲ Advertisements, such as those in magazines, are just one example of touch points.

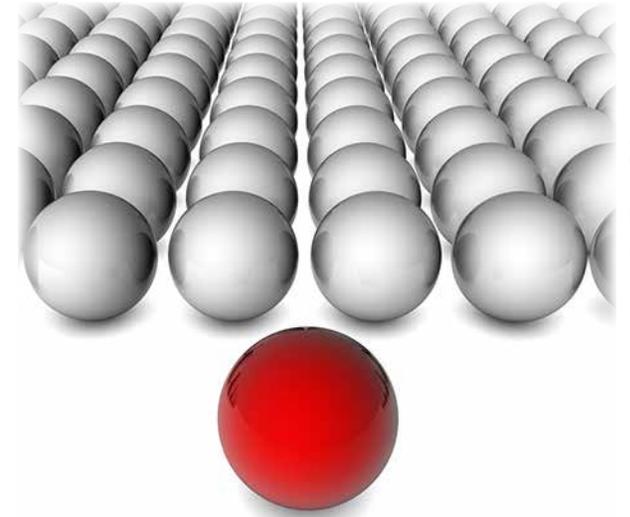
How to identify your company's brand promise

Step One—Understand the benefit(s) your brand provides to its target customers.

Remember, brand promise is not a description of what a company or product does. Rather, it's a message to customers that the brand meets a need or want that is very important to them. A business that wants to bring in lunch for its staff may have dozens of catering options to choose from. But, your catering business is the only one that offers a unique dessert bar, including a chocolate fountain. Your brand promise is the fun, one-of-a-kind experience they can't get anywhere else. That's what its target customers are looking for something unique that can benefit them by fulfilling this need.

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Step Two—Understand what makes your brand stand out from the competition. We've covered it already, but it's worth repeating—brand promise shows what makes the company extraordinary! What does your company do that other businesses can't or don't? This doesn't only apply to the goods and services you offer, but also to the overall feeling and experience customers get when interacting with your brand.



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▲ *What makes your brand stand out from the competition?*