

## Image Positioning - Differentiate to Communicate Value

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American society is intrigued by image. Consider this related word - imagine. Disney is all about the customer experience and emotionally and magically transports guests to another time or place. Image is often associated with entertainment, fashion, and technology markets. Corporate image is the reputation of an organization viewed by its various stakeholders - investors, employees, customers, business partners, communities, etc. All companies have a singular corporate personality that differentiates them from their rivals. The communication challenge is to manage and enhance the firm's identity over time.

A perceived image is based on two components: 1) what the company does and says, and 2) what the customers/market say about the organization - this is more important. Companies must manage a strong IMC (integrated marketing communications) program consisting of advertising, selling, sales promotion, online, social media, and public relations activities. Customer-generated content such as Facebook posts, tweets, blogs, and online communities can dramatically impact organizational performance.

Perhaps your company is not a global giant - does image research make sense for you? Consider these queries as you revisit your marketing communications strategy. How important is image in your value proposition? Should it be even more important? Does your image clearly resonate with your target market? How can you get your customers and the market to share more positive messages about your company? What is your main point of differentiation from your competitors? Should coolness be a major or minor part of your IMC strategy? How can you best tell your business story to communicate value?

Art Weinstein, Ph.D., is Chair and Professor of Marketing at Nova Southeastern University and author of *Superior Customer Value - Strategies for Winning and Retaining Customers*. He may be reached at [art@nova.edu](mailto:art@nova.edu) or 954-262-5097; visit his website [www.artweinstein.com](http://www.artweinstein.com) [Read More](#)