



Do Customers Buy Because of Your Core Values?

Absolutely – according to a recent [Harvard Business Review Article](#).

As we've discussed in [previous posts](#), customers buy brands and pay more for brands they want to be associated with. But, it's not just your logo and advertising that creates your brand. Your brand is created by every interaction a customer has with your organization. That is why it all begins with the core values of your organization. Your core values drive your culture, which defines all your customer interactions and those interactions define your brand!

In the HBR study, 64% of customers who said they had a relationship with a brand said it was because of the values they shared with the brand. Do you remember the Nike sweatshop scandal? Nike's products became associated with slave wages and worker abuse. Consumers didn't want to promote those practices by buying Nike's products and Nike was forced to make a massive turnaround in the way it manufactured its products. The product quality was never a problem, the values of the corporation were what customers no longer wanted to be associated with.

On the flip side of the coin is Patagonia apparel. They make amazing clothing, but is it worth the up to 50% price premium? Their customers are not just buying the quality, they are buying the brand and what it stands for. Their brand stands for doing the right thing for the environment, for being a good steward of the earth God has given us and people flock to that brand.

But you know what? Plenty of people think the folks at Patagonia are just environmental whackos selling overpriced shirts made of recycled water bottles. That's OK. Those people are not Patagonia's target market.

To mean anything, brands must stand for something. That something is the true values your organization is built upon. Our world has become more transparent than ever. You can no longer hide your true values – at least not for long.

Here's the hard part, standing for something means you will upset people who don't agree with what you stand for. It hurts when people don't like you, but you cannot stand for anything without upsetting some people. If you try to please everyone you will be so plain vanilla no one will have a reason to like you.

Here's my advice. A strong brand requires you to turn some people off. Get used to it and stand up for what you believe in. Love everyone, but please don't try to please all of them!

What do you stand for? Or, are you just plain vanilla?

Curt Fowler is an organizational growth expert and President of Fowler & Company, a business advisory firm dedicated to helping leaders create and achieve a compelling vision for their organization. He has an MBA in Strategy and Entrepreneurship from the Kellogg School, is a CPA, and a pretty good guy as defined by his wife and four children.

Are you ready to start defining your brand? Head over to our [Resource Page](#) to find great tools to get you started.

You can also reach us by phone at 229-375-5613.