

FIVE TELLTALE SIGNS

A REAL ESTATE BRAND LACKS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ... AND WHY CONSUMERS CARE



MERILEE KERN

BY MERILEE KERN

Although there is tremendous buzz advocating the power and efficacy of emotional intelligence in modern real estate marketing and branding endeavors, there is little consistency and clarity on fundamental best practices and methodologies. These fundamentals, when further honed and refined, can result in highly sophisticated and emotive brand building that resonates with the intended audiences and compels them into the desired action.

That same clarity is needed on pitfalls that can impede progress as a real estate brand seeks to engage and truly connect with the hearts and minds of their intended audience—not just their wallets. Doing so breeds the kind of loyalty that can sustain consumer relationships for a lifetime.

A 2023 Emotional Intelligence Market study citing “heavy growth” of \$49.93 billion by 2027 exemplifies the extent to which mastering “EQ” versus IQ takes brands to exciting new levels of success and why not embracing EQ can result in opportunity loss.

Martha Marchesi, CEO of JK Design — a full-service creative agency with a roster that includes Tiffany & Co., Johnson & Johnson, Priceline, Prudential, ADP and more — provides insights on five telltale signs that a real estate brand may lack emotional intelligence and how to ensure EQ is employed effectively in marketing strategies:

Lack of Empathy in Messaging

An emotionally intelligent brand demonstrates empathy by understanding and addressing the emotions, concerns and needs

of its customers. A brand that lacks empathy may come across as cold, indifferent or out-of-touch in its messaging. This can not only lead to a weakened brand image, but also outright customer dissatisfaction. Egregious and extreme cases of brands being emotionally “tone dead” can cause a brand to be publicly “flamed” on social media and elsewhere.

One great way to exhibit empathy in brand messaging is to address common and specific customer pain points related to productivity, financial, processes and support. Another approach is to use storytelling that highlights relatable customer experiences such as cost savings, productivity, efficiencies and customer support. It’s also imperative to ensure that empathy is conveyed in an authentic

way that will resonate with the intended audience. One easy way to achieve this is for public communications from company executives, or which represent the brand as a whole, to display vulnerability, which fosters relatability and trust.

In the post-COVID-19 marketplace, there has been a profound and pivotal cultural shift toward empathy and engagement that is requiring business leaders and companies to enhance these kinds of EQ skill sets to meet new expectations. Another effective method to demonstrate empathy is to utilize genuine customer testimonials, stories and case studies that articulate first-hand brand experiences.

Uniform Communications

Emotionally intelligent brands tailor their messaging by

MARTHA MARCHESI

customer segment. If your brand serves both young professionals and retirees, entirely separate, targeted messaging and visuals for each group are in order. But try to dig deeper so you can use language and imagery that will resonate on a more individual level.

Even before crafting specific messaging, a brand must first wholly understand what makes each segment tick. What are their values? What inspires them to action? What upsets them? A fully formed profile of each customer category must be developed and continuously honed to ensure your brand's messaging keeps pace with ever-evolving sensibilities and cultural shifts.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MERILEE KERN

Overemphasis on Features Over Benefits

Emotionally intelligent brands understand that customers care more about the benefits of a product or service than its nuts-and-bolts features. Brands that focus too heavily on product attributes and technical specifications should shift their focus to how those features will improve customers' lives. Use clear and concise benefit statements related to a product's usability, safety, environmental responsibility, affordability, durability and more. Or stress that a service will save time, make users more efficient and productive, enhance the quality of their work or make an experience more enjoyable. Cite as many user benefits as possible to make an unequivocal case as to why your solution is the solution.

Another tried-and-true approach is creating relatable use-case scenarios that detail how clients or customers have specifically benefited by working with your brand. All the better if this use-case can

include metrics data and analytics. By leading with the various ways the product or service can impact and enhance the lives of its users, your brand can forge stronger emotional connections than by simply touting features and attributes.

Disregard for Customer Feedback

Emotionally intelligent brands actively seek, value and utilize customer feedback in sustained efforts to improve their products and services and fine-tune future messaging. Brands that ignore customer feedback may struggle to develop a loyal customer base. Conduct regular informal polls, more formal customer surveys, actively monitoring social media channels or even hosting focus groups.

Customer feedback, positive or negative, is valuable and powerful market research. However, beyond just collecting and cataloging the data, EQ-driven brands take concerted action on each viable data point — including sharing those insights with all applicable internal teams and other appropriate stakeholders to ensure the collective has an accurate “temperature” and cohesive understanding of the organization's KPIs at any given time.

Inability to Convey Values

Emotionally intelligent brands embrace and effectively communicate their core values and beliefs. They figuratively wear their brand values as a badge of honor and let those ideals guide the way as the company's marketing communications' North Star. For example, brands can easily showcase their commitment to sustainability through overt green initiatives, which customers are made aware of through public communications and discourse. Of course, demonstratively exhibiting how values are being upheld can be detailed on a brand's website, but should also

include citations in public relations, social media, on- and offline advertising, direct email and newsletters, signage and other efforts. Some highly EQ-equipped brands exemplify their values by participating in charitable events that align.

While the expression certainly need not be overtly impassioned or “over the top,” brands that fail to express their values or purpose in some identifiable way may need to reassess how they communicate their mission. This recalibration can foster a stronger emotional connection with prospects and customers. A good first step in this direction is to clearly define and articulate brand values internally. From there, systematically and concertedly integrate those values across all marketing channels with consistency, ensuring a cohesive and authentic message is conveyed to your audience at every possible touchpoint.

Emotional intelligence is key to any marketing strategy. It should be upheld as your brand's guide to craft your story, develop inspired positioning and brand architecture, empower your sales force, create engaging content, collaborate with your creative team, transform the typical e-commerce experience into a story-driven customer journey, measure your results and so much more.

By making impactful and authentic emotional connections with your audience and continuously fine-tuning that approach, you can drive meaningful results — the kind that creates even unforeseen advantages and helps you not just achieve, but exceed, your goals.

Merilee Kern, MBA is a brand strategist and analyst who reports on industry change makers, movers, shakers and innovators across all B2B and B2C categories.



MARTHA MARCHESI