

Over 20 years ago I showed up at a Washington DC advertising agency for a job interview. The agency head turned out to be a rather strange chap (as I got to know him better after choosing to join a different agency) but the first thing he told me that day was a maxim that I still quote liberally today:

“The good ad is the one that sells”. The veracity of the statement is patently obvious when seen in naked black and white, but it is a fact that is often forgotten in the marketing business. While agencies and clients are often swayed by funny phrases and cute pictures in the creation of their marketing, the simple truth is: if you are not “moving more product” your marketing is not working. At Idea Engineering we believe that marketing success starts a little earlier than glib creative. It starts with Brand. I find that the concept of Brand is often misunderstood both by clients and agencies, which is unfortunate because without *any* brand you are just a commodity, and with a *poorly conceived* brand you are merely confusing your customers. A strong brand creates customer loyalty. A strong brand allows you to charge a premium for your product or service. A strong brand is the differentiator between you and everyone else that does what you do.

And that is why it all starts with brand. If your brand is strong and true, then every dollar you spend on marketing is adding to the success of your company. If your brand is ill conceived or non-existent, then some percentage of your marketing dollars are being flushed down the drain every day.

If you are driving to San Francisco and you accidentally get on the freeway to Chicago, pushing your foot harder on the gas only takes you to the wrong place faster. In the same way if your brand is off-kilter, more advertising only spreads the wrong message further.

As Guy Gabriele (The IE Creative Director) says, “your brand exists in the mind of your customers; whatever they *think* you are is effectively exactly *what* you are”.

So ask yourself, “What is my brand?” Better yet ask your customers. See if *they* think you are who *you* think you are.