

**BRANDING** By Daniel Scheffler (@danielscheffler)



# THE MEASURE OF EXCELLENCE

For every idea in a business there is an equally important and formidable brand related role, a role engineered to uphold the expected and desired quality of both the brand and all its tendrils

**FROM BROAD** managers, to fancy strategists, to PR bewitches, to engirdled ambassadors, to everyone-is-doing-it-so-I-can-too designers. Their roles, albeit technically different, has a similar tenor – to save the face of the brand, to duck from flying debris and if it hits to wipe the egg off its glower. All of these brand roles invaluable to the business that forge them, priceless to the clients they so humbly serve and dedicate their awards to and of course this all offers a revived spectrum of bumpitousness. But in this jot of quality, who is truly the janitor of it?

**MY NAME IS BILLY**

Quality control, the process of reviewing all

factors involved in a process, is about inspection: a scrutiny of value, and delivery of promises. Different from quality assurance that makes sure the right things are done in the right ways and attempts to approve the processes to avoid any problems along the line. The control places its emphasis on uncovering defects and reporting to a higher power if something is not up to, let's call it, scratch. So looking at both control and assurance who quantifies and qualifies this exact science within a business? The brand name of course.

Buyers pay premium for products or services that bear a brand name, sometimes even for an indistinguishably different product or service that carries the right epithet. Benjamin Klein (a professor emeritus of economics at UCLA) relates how in the Communist revolution of 1917 all brand names on goods in the Soviet Union were banished as the *numero unos* believed that the extra cost for a product that was merely promoted was

imprudent. But the demise was swift, consumers had no idea how to differentiate between products using past experience: so bad products could not be condemned and good experiences could not be vaunted.

**FLYING IS FLYING?**

The incentive for a brand (with a brand name) is greater as the surety of quality is implied, and a premium is paid for this added assurance. So even when it comes to something as congested as the airline industry where so many brands exist and compete the quality controls (whether to do with experience or security) takes precedence over price now that low cost airlines have disappointed around the world with their lack of quality and snarky tune ups. Flying is flying, but what quality gets associated with the brand is what directs consumers from one airline to another, again and again. Take the aspirin example (highlighted by Prof. Klein): a standardised product where the basic ingredient is acetylsalicylic acid but the consumer is willing to pay more for the

the reigns to Billy Yeomans, age 10, from Chichester in the UK. Little Billy was appointed to test and approve the airline's newly refurbished 747 fleet as the Junior Approvals Manager. This Virgin Atlantic refitting of the entire leisure fleet of 747s cost the business well over £50 million and so finding quality measures was high on the list of priorities.

So Billy, although it was one small part of the brand's 'once-over', could report back on everything he experienced from food, to entertainment, to service etc. He will also be consulted for future on-board improvements and specifically for child-focused developments undertaken by the airline. So plug the proverbial 'Billy' into every department, area, division and see what's truly happening under the hood. Sir Richard Branson, the father of the maverick brand Virgin, has outdone himself this time: finding new ways to see where the brand can improve on their quality and adding in an element of fun.

**LEG ROOM**

The potential lesson here, to brands and agencies, is that quality is not only seen or experienced by the obvious roles designated to finding gaps and coups and the usual customer services with report backs. But more importantly by giving the 'right' person just enough access, and leg room, to thoroughly consider and evaluate the brand within parameters that can be controlled and reported on, might just be the way to ensure quality and distinction tomorrow, and the next day.

Let's see who's next to upheave in the revolution of quality. <



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