

SELLING POINTS

Branding guru Harry Beckwith offers some “unforgettable” advice to companies looking to create a powerful brand identity: capitalize on the power of the unusual; choose an “unconfusable” name.

Consider these great brands: Harley Davidson, Nike, Procter & Gamble, Sony, Rolls Royce, Disney, Kleenex, Harvard, Coca-Cola, Kodak, Honda, Levi Strauss, Xerox, Mercedes-Benz, and Marlboro.

What’s particularly striking about this list? These brands share their names with virtually nothing else. People associate the names only with the companies behind them.

As a result, the names have no prior bad associations created by a connection — even an inadvertent one — with something else by the same name. They are “unconfusable.”

To speed up the building of your brand, choose an “unconfusable” name as well.



“Thank you for holding. This call may be monitored for quality purposes. Of course, if we really cared about quality, we’d hire more people to answer the phones.”

The secret of Willie’s success? Focus on being yourself.

by Connie Brubaker

Every Fourth of July, I get an itch to attend Willie Nelson’s annual picnic. A Texas tradition since 1973, the picnic brings together both young and old from all walks of life: cowboys, yuppies, hippies, middle class white collar types, college



Connie’s Comments

kids — you name it.

Looking at Willie’s early years, you probably never would have predicted that he’d become an icon in the music scene. Born during the Great Depression, he was abandoned by his mother and raised mostly by his grandparents and a handful of aunts. His grandfather gave him his first — and last — “formal” music lesson at age six on a \$3.00 Sears Roebuck guitar.

As a young man, Willie fought an uphill battle against Nashville’s criticisms of his conversational, intentionally off-the-beat style of vocal phrasing. For over ten years, he struggled through three labels and 14 albums without cutting a breakthrough record — in large part because of the industry’s insistence on using session players instead of Willie’s own band and often burying his unusual vocal style behind horns and strings.

“My demos were always better, I thought, than the records that came out,” Willie said later. “After all the



voices and the strings had been put onto the record, it wasn’t anything that I could reproduce live onstage anywhere. It sounded beautiful, but it wasn’t me. I wasn’t comfortable doing it, and it didn’t sell.”

Then Willie’s home burnt down. Deciding to take it as an omen, he left his business suits and disappointments in Nashville and returned to his Texas roots. He released the stark and raw *Red-Headed Stranger*, which contained the unexpected smash hit “Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain.” Soon after he released *Wanted: The Outlaws*, which became the first million-selling country album. The rest is history.

So what does any of this have to do with sales and customer service?

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Brand-building lessons from the Red-Headed Stranger

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Believe it or not, Willie's hard-learned lessons apply to businesses as much as to aspiring country singers.

- **Don't try to be something you're not.** For years, Willie tried the cookie cutter approach — and failed.

- **Create a unique image.** Over the years, Willie has branded himself with his trademark long braids, boots and headbands. He's one of the most recognizable figures in music.

- **Stay on message.** Even when singing duets with Julio Iglesias or U2,

Willie delivers one message with his unique voice, phrasing and simple guitar style.

- **You can't be all things to all people.** Focus on one thing and make it reflect who you are and what you stand for. Willie is known particularly for his Farm Aid concerts to help struggling farmers.

Years ago, Dominoes Pizza created a strong service position by stressing fast, reliable delivery. Ad after ad promised "30 minutes or it's free."

Notably, Dominoes never focused on quality, price or value. But ask company president Tom Monaghan the

secret of their success and he answers "a fanatical focus on doing one thing well."

The music industry is notoriously competitive — just like business. And just like banks, realtors, financial services and other companies offering the same commodity, it is your voice, style and unique positioning that resonate with listeners — and customers.

Only a few make it, so give yourself a fighting chance. Embrace the one distinctive thing that will give you a competitive advantage. Learn it, live it and, before you know it, your customers will love you for it.

WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR SALES TO WOMEN? Sign up for one of Connie's informative, insightful and fun workshops on *Women's Role in the New World Market*. Choose from:

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- *Marketing to Women*
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Connie Brubaker is a certified Integrity Systems® business consultant and professional speaker who focuses on sales, customer service and leadership.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I was just looking at a new list somebody put together here of the 30 highest-selling album sales of all time, and I'm number 25 with 31 million. The Beatles are on top with 70-something million and Brooks is second with 60 million. I'm right under Prince and right over Eric Clapton, so I'm in good shape. And they didn't even count the bootlegs."

— Willie Nelson