

Eddie Bauer, Who Art Thou?

As the saying goes, “There’s nothing more comforting than familiarity.” Until it’s not. Has the Eddie Bauer brand had an identity crisis through the years? You decide. Is it having one today? Yours to decide yet again.

Eddie Bauer EST. 1920[®]

The Eddie Bauer brand has had a long and storied history. Mr. Eddie Bauer was an outdoorsman,

adventurer, and inventor. If he couldn’t find an item, he would create, market, and distribute it. The goose down parka, Bomber jacket, and hand-made fly-fishing ties are just some of Bauer’s creations.

Needless to say, by fulfilling needs and wants for the sporting set, and with this unconditional guarantee, “To give you such outstanding quality, value, service, and guarantee that we may be worthy of your high esteem,” it was no wonder the Eddie Bauer Sport Shop, and soon to follow mail order catalogue, flourished.

Any brand that has as long a shelf life as Bauer will most certainly experience both consistency and inconsistency along the way. Bauer is no exception. The brand has been bought and sold by various parties in 1968, 1971, and 1988. In 2005 and again in 2009 the brand was in bankruptcy.

Their tagline that went from “Expedition Outfitter” to “All Week Long” is no less than a 180-degree turn. Eddie Bauer went from outdoor, adventure, and military retailing to a “blanket statement” that covers everything from home furnishings, baby strollers, eyewear, and vehicle interiors. Ask 5 different people what comes to mind when they hear Eddie Bauer, and you will get 5 or more different answers.

So now, under new leadership, the brand is looking to get back to its roots. The only thing that has been a consistent message from Bauer is the unconditional guarantee still found on the company website. If Bauer succeeds in steering the ship back to its original incarnation remains to be seen. Our guess is what the all-knowing Austin Powers, Man of Mystery, had to say in his first movie, “Unfortunately for yours truly, that ship has left the airport.” Either Bauer customers will be at an airport trying to find a ship, or they’ll be buying from a competitor with whom nothing is more comforting than familiarity.

Protect Thy Brand. Be Consistent. Be Quality. Be Familiar.



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