

American Made Trucks... Valuable Branding Lessons To Be Learned

Chevy Trucks, Ford F-Series, and Ram... three brands of trucks that are made in the USA and three brands that provide many insights to be learned from a branding perspective. America's truck manufacturers do not take a back seat to any consumer brand when it comes to giving their product a personality and using personalities as spokespeople. There may be things to be learned in how trucks are branded and how celebrities can help.

Ford F-Series: Mike Rowe and Denis Leary are the primary voices for Ford F-Series trucks. Right from the start, it's easy to tell that Ford wants to position its trucks as hard working, tough, reliable, and having good fuel economy. While Rowe presents a confident and trust-worthy image, Leary comes across as in your face, but in a way that is believable. On occasion country singer Toby Keith chimes in and promotes the Heavy-Duty part of the Ford truck family. Keith is a very proud American and not afraid to speak his mind. While all three have very different personalities, they all work well for Ford to help tell and sell the F-Series story.

Ram: Guts•Glory•Ram. Pretty simple. Their pitchman Sam Elliott fits the positioning of Ram Trucks like a glove. Elliott is no BS, no frills, and the kind of guy who represents all that is tough... when it comes to being tough. Even his voice personifies ruggedness. Ram has made some good strides in the category as of late. Their offer of a 100,000-mile power train warranty even supports the brands' positioning of being hard to the core. Interestingly, Ram now touts the fact that they are the only truck brand that just makes trucks: true, and a unique position that should have some legs for them. Furthermore, it ties in nicely with the Guts•Glory•Ram brand messaging.

Chevy Trucks: Go to the Chevy Trucks Internet site. Is there a discernable position for the brand? While the Silverado model is on the home page, is it clear what the brand really communicates? Chevy Trucks has used the likes of Tim Allen and NFL Hall of Famer Howie Long as spokesmen for the brand in the past. However today, they do not seem to have an identifiable personality that connects the audience to the brand. Years ago, they used clear messaging from the likes of songwriters John Mellancamp ("Our Country") and Bob Seger ("Like a Rock") to convey brand features. It is arguable how well those campaigns worked, but Chevy hung onto that messaging for quite some time. While Chevy makes a very good truck, it does not seem obvious as to what the brand stands for.

Protect thy brand. A brand needs to stand for something or it may stand for nothing at all.