

PROMISE VS. DELIVERY: BOB SGARLATA

I recently read this online at KC's MNB Wake Up Call:

McDonald's Testing A New Face

BrandWeek reports that McDonald's is working to modernize its store designs, changing uniforms and improving menu boards as well as adding "comfortable seating fabrics, zoned Wi-Fi areas and dimmer lighting" in an effort to be more like hipper competitors like Starbucks and the Panera Bread Company.

McDonald's reportedly wants to make the stores more appealing to adults as well as kids. It will create zones in its units that will make some sections more attractive to people in a hurry, and some more appropriate to people looking to linger.

KC's View: They'd have to dim the lights real, real low if they want to get us to linger. We find it difficult to believe that there is anything cultural going on here. It is just an effort to put on a new face. Design without a soul is just decoration.

Bob's thoughts:

The last sentence, while clever, understates the true issue here: promise vs. delivery . . . and the capability to even deliver on the promise, given existing, and perhaps unchanging variables such as culture, environment and customer expectations.

Don't get me wrong, it's a nice idea; but I am not sure if a Starbucks environment plays well in the *reality* of a McDonald's. I'm an open person; I can even think of a few times when circumstances led me to eat at a McDonald's . . . times when I wanted to just linger awhile, gather my thoughts and enjoy the moment. *NOT!*

Think of it: McDonald's is to fast food what Scotch is to tape; what Kleenex is to a running nose. McDonald's stands for *FAST!* For gosh sakes they created the category of *fast* food. From day one they were built on a foundation of *Speed* - everything: menu items, ordering, food preparation, delivery and payment -- *Fast!*

So what's with the new environment?

Now when you come to McDonald's, we want you to slow down . . . savor the blended aromas of Fillet of Fish and Big Mac while you aimlessly chat with your hip friends.

Yes, open that laptop; become one with your computer, dance thru hundreds of unwanted and unneeded emails and complex spreadsheets as you bask in the ambience of screaming kids running, babies crying and the despondent look of overwhelmed young mothers.

Sure, they said that they were going to have 'zones'. But, how the heck do you 'enforce' a 'zone'? How do you/can you, direct customers to ". . . sections more attractive to people in a hurry, and some more appropriate to people looking to linger"?

Are we talking Berlin Wall type zones?

Promise vs. delivery. It can take several forms: a lack of execution is one. But perhaps in McDonald's case it just might be an inability to change everything that you were built upon and everything that you built around.

When it comes to your company or your brands or your latest launch, what is your promise vs. delivery . . . at the Buyer's desk, at the distribution center, at the retail shelf and in the consumers' use? Are you meeting expectations and promises made?

In nearly 30 years of being on "both sides of the desk," I all too often found the norm to be '*over promise & under deliver*' rather than the contrary; and more so than not, the genesis for missed expectations and damaged relationships.

Do you deliver what you promise?

Clearly ask and candidly answer that before every major presentation . . . there's a good chance your competitor is not.