

A FRESH PAIR OF EYES

Weekly Edition – 3/9/2014

SEAN STEIN SMITH - MBA, CPA, CMA, CGMA

Branding Power

Brands are an essential part of any business, and there are entire departments that are tasked with creating, developing, and maintaining corporate brands. Sometimes worth in the tens of billions of dollars, these are undoubtedly assets to firms. Higher sales, better market position, and most satisfied regulators are all benefits that can be derived from having a strong and well-developed brand, but these benefits do not have to be limited to corporations.

Individuals such as Richard Branson (the Virgin empire), Donald Trump (need more be said) and Jay-Z (whom many thought was a majority owner in the Brooklyn Nets due to excellent marketing, and who has built a media empire on top of a hip-hop career), have all built brands that are extremely valuable as well as being extensions of themselves. Another excellent example of personal brand building tying into business is George Zimmer: the former CEO and founder of Men's Warehouse built the firm into a household name. Since his termination, the firm has been involved in infighting and potential mergers/buyouts of competitors

How strong is your brand?

Here the link to my weekly podcast - The Weekly Business Roundup

[Weekly Business Roundup 3/8/2014](#)



Contact - A Fresh Pair of Eyes

Feel free to reach out with your comments/suggestions or questions.

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INVESTING TIP/DEFINITION

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Bringing it all together

Branding is essential aspect of any business operation, and as far as your professional/career development is concerned, you are a business operation. There are revenue, expense, assets, and liabilities, and you always looking for new ways to increase your value in the marketplace, whether it be through a new job, a raise at your current job, or starting your own business. Marketing is a word that is often used, and branding is something that is thrown around quite a bit, but what does your brand actually mean?

A brand is your first impression to a customer or business partner. When you think of IBM or Coca-Cola, you know exactly what these firms stand for, the quality they deliver, and the business expertise that they have. Apple is known for beautifully designed and elegant products, and an easy-to-use interface. Obviously, branding a business is an essential part of any business strategy, so the question becomes – what is your brand?

What do people think of when they think of you in a professional capacity? What value and expertise do you bring to the marketplace to help solve business problems?

Education, certifications, a solid social media presence, and of course, practice, are all excellent ways to build up your own personal brand equity.

How strong is your brand?

Brand equity

This is a financial term that could seem to be confusing and/or intimidating at first, but is actually relatively easy to understand. What brand equity represents is the premium that customers are willing to pay for goods and services. Example: people buy Coca-Cola over house brands even though it costs more. That's brand equity.

A Fresh Pair of Eyes Definition

Brand – an intangible asset and idea, but one that can be very powerful for business purposes. This idea communicates to customers, competitors, employee, and regulators.

Brand Moat

A brand moat is a term that is often used by the famous value investor Warren Buffett, and it has to do with the strength of a firm's brand. A strong brand, which has developed into a strong market position and customer support, can provide an additional layer of protection for firms against competitors. Buffett has cited Coca-Cola and IBM as having strong moats.

What do you think?

Let us know what you think, and it might become the topic of a blog post or follow up newsletter article.

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THE WEEK AHEAD

Sean Stein Smith - MBA, CPA, CMA, CGMA

It is always good to recap and to analyze what happened during the past week, which is what I strive to do via the weekly roundup podcast (link to it is above). In addition to analyzing what did happen, it is equally important to look forward to try to anticipate how the upcoming events of the week ahead could impact you and your money. That is the point of this column, which is broken down into domestic events, as well as the international events that could be of importance to your investments.

Budget Tip – Branding Done Right

Building a personal brand does not have to be an expensive or arduous procedure. You can develop a professional-looking website, create a polished-looking LinkedIn page, and order professional business cards for under \$500. Website hosting services are very affordable, LinkedIn is free, and card printers like Vistaprint are constantly running promotions. All that is left is for you to decide what your personal brand is.

Excel - Formatting Shortcuts

A few of simplest shortcuts can also be some of the most time saving. If you have raw data and need to convert it into dollars or percentages, simply use the following:

Ctrl + Shift + 4 = dollar formatting
Ctrl + Shift + 5 = percentage formatting

Easy!

What do you think?

Let me know if these tips were helpful

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Domestic

Let us start our discussion with the news and economic activity that are on the agenda for the U.S. this week.

This week had superficial headlines dominated primarily by the weather, but underneath the conversation and speculation concerning the cold weather, there are numerous trends and stories that are poised to dominate the conversation moving forward. The Keystone XL pipeline has resurfaced as main topic of conversation this week, especially in the light of the recent train derailments. In addition to this energy oriented story, Warren Buffett (who coincidentally owns an railroad company) has been reiterating his viewpoint that America still holds some of most lucrative investment opportunities in the world.

Another enormous story that broke later in the week was the possible unmasking of the founder of Bitcoin. An unassuming man, uncovered by intrepid reporting, was put forward as the true founder of Bitcoin, but almost immediately controversy began to swirl. The man, who had (allegedly) admitted to being founder of Bitcoin (before stepping away more recently), began publicly back-tracking on these statements almost immediately after the story broke in the media. This story, and the implications that it has for Bitcoin and the digital currency overall, will be sure to be a top story moving forward.

Of course, there will be corporate news announced during the week as well, so keep your eyes open and check out the blog @ <http://ssteinsmith.com/> for daily analysis!

International

Tensions in the Crimean peninsula continued to escalate this week, as the Crimean parliaments voted to rejoin the Russian Federation of an autonomous region. Economic sanctions, asset freezes, and the cutting off of natural gas were all put forward as possible consequences of rising tensions in the area. Another story that might have been overlooked this week is the possible restructuring of the Mexican T.V. and phone industry.



THE WEEKLY EDITION

Feedback is Always Welcome!

Feedback is the key to continuous improvement, so if there are any topics, themes, or stories you would like covered in the weekly newsletter, or if there is something you wish to know more about, please send an email to afreshpairefeyes88@gmail.com.

Thanks again for reading!

Sean

A Fresh Pair of Eyes

**Making Sense of Finance and
Accounting**

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If you like the newsletter, you might also enjoy the book. "A Fresh Pair of Eyes - Finance for the Young Investor" is available on both Amazon and in the Kindle Store.

A Fresh Pair of Eyes - Finance for the Young Investor

Personal Financial Planning

A Fresh Pair of Eyes - Personal Financial Planning

And my new book - Stocks

A Fresh Pair of Eyes - Stocks for the Young Investor

