

# Bling in a Blue Box

## HOW AN ICONIC BRAND DELIVERS ITS PROMISE

A brand is a promise. And while great brands make sure they deliver that in every single customer interaction, few can say their promise is personified by a blue box. In the last of this series of articles, **Neil Osborne** explains how a brand that consistently keeps its promise across every aspect of its branding — from products through media, to emotional engagement and everything in between — can become a timeless icon.

Yes, we're talking about that blue box — the one every girl dreams of being given. Funnily enough though, what's most desired is the certainty the blue box promises: the surety that a magical moment has arrived. And why is that?

Because it's the Tiffany Blue Box.

For some, that blue box symbolises centuries of design and style. For others, it's distinctive jewellery of the highest quality. However for most, it's the emotion sparked by that promise-in-a-box. And as Tiffany & Co. have planned, engineered and executed, that particular promise translates in every language, to love.

Given its iconic status, you may wonder how a little cardboard box became the embodiment of so many dreams and desires. The answer ... almost two centuries of brilliant branding.

It's that simple.

### Part Seven: Promises & Professionalism

Professionalism and promise are the two words that form the core of your brand commitment to customers. And like two hearts, they're inextricably entwined.

Why? Sadly the answer doesn't sparkle, but it's just as valuable: Brand loyalty isn't given, it's earned — because customers directly measure your professionalism through the consistent delivery of your brand promise.

### Declaring your love

Marriage is a long-term commitment.

A brand promise is no different. It irrevocably



joins together your brand purpose, positioning, strategy, people and customer experience.

Put simply, it's what the business commits (to do, say or deliver) to those who interact with it. It must:

1. Be a powerful, tangible benefit
2. Be authentic and credible
3. Be repeatedly delivered

However, it's not the literal description of what a brand does or provides. Instead, it describes the brand's character — the emotional connection it creates.

“Brand loyalty isn't given, it's earned — because customers directly measure your professionalism through the consistent delivery of your brand promise.”

It articulates what the brand promises to be, emotionally, for its customers. Now and forever ... until the two shall part.

### Engagement rings true

In 1837, Tiffany and Co. opened its doors for business. Shortly thereafter the iconic shade of blue — robin's nest blue — was chosen to symbolise the brand image. Consistently used across packaging, catalogues and media, the Tiffany Blue (colour) quickly became an icon, representing luxury, quality and exclusivity.

When Tiffany & Co. introduced its diamond engagement ring in 1886, the effect was complete. The Tiffany Blue Box became as coveted as the ring itself (or whatever else nestled inside). Instantly identifiable, that particular shade of blue silently represented everything (said and unsaid) about the Tiffany brand.

*“... the quality of these creations, consistently and flawlessly delivered engendered a relationship of trust between Tiffany & Co. and its customers. Over time, Tiffany's devoted clientele came to associate the vibrant blue box with this special relationship and the highest standards of excellence.”*

Tiffany & Co.

Almost two centuries later, the Tiffany Blue Box remains one of the most iconic symbols and oft-used example of a brand-promise-in-a-box, in the world.

What does it promise? Love.

### Keeping your vows

However, a brand needs to keep its promises. If it fails to do that, confusion, dissatisfaction and loss of trust quickly follow. It's a normal human reaction.

Customers question the brand's professionalism and look for a replacement — one that meets their expectations and consistently keeps its promise. Customers are lost, sales decline, reputations disappear and the downward spiral continues.

All from a broken brand promise.

On the flip side, when a brand keeps its promise, customers trust it. And each time you do that, you increase your brand equity with customers.

That directly leads to: repeat purchases (brand loyalists), talk on social media (brand advocates) and a widening of brand awareness (new customers). Money can't buy that kind of word-of-mouth endorsement and exposure.

### Trust your dream

Building a brand is long-term. It's hard, but not impossible.

Tiffany's has spent the better part of two centuries building their brand. There is a one-of-a-kind story, but it's succeeded for one primary reason: consistency. The little blue box that delivers their promise has remained a constant, trustworthy indication of what customers can expect and what the brand delivers.

However had their consistency even slightly wavered, the certainty in the minds of their customers of that magic moment happening would surely have been lost to the ether.

Instead, to this day, the Tiffany Blue Box is one of the most coveted retail containers in history. And there's the paradox of their promise and professionalism. Without the box, it's just a piece of jewellery. With the box,

### THE 7 P'S OF BRAND BUILDING IN THE SALON INDUSTRY

The traditional marketing model consists of just 4 P's — product, place, price and promotion.

However, a successful salon industry brand needs a plan that's specifically tailored to suit the idiosyncratic needs of the industry.

The 7P's of the salon industry consist of:

1. Product & Proposition:
2. Packaging & Performance:
3. Price & Positioning:
4. Placement & Partners:
5. Promotion & Proof:
6. People & Passion
7. Promises & Professionalism

Working together, they form the bedrock of your brand, and give meaning to every customer interaction.

it becomes an iconic piece of timeless luxury. It represents love.

Now that's brilliant branding.

### Love marks

I'm often asked what a brand is. It's a question that even seasoned business people and marketers don't fully grasp. The answer is just one word. No, it isn't logo, tagline, or any other tangible thing that represents a brand. It's something deeper.

A brand is about meaning.

It's the sum total of all the meanings you've given to every aspect of your brand as you've built it — all of the 7 P's (see sidebar box) — which in turn, your customers then carry around with them in their heads and hearts.

Simply, a brand is everything your customers think, feel, say, hear, read, watch, imagine, suspect and even hope about your product, service or business.

It's the mark you leave on their heart. ■

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