



Rajiv Kapur is one of the country's leading innovators in the field of experiential branding. As founder and CEO of Configurations, he has developed his company into an industry leader by bringing comprehensive strategic, creative and tactical thinking together for numerous corporate clients in a unique process he calls "The Art of Creative Integration."

Nick: Hey everyone, Nick Nanton here. I'm really excited about this month's one-on-one with a good friend of mine, Mr. Rajiv Kapur. Rajiv is the world's most knowledgeable expert on experiential branding. Welcome Rajiv.

Rajiv: Good to be here Nick. Thanks for the opportunity.

Nick: No problem. So Rajiv, I talk to people about branding all the time, mostly about celebrity branding and personal branding. But let's talk about experiential branding. Can you break it down for everybody and explain what it is?

Rajiv: Sure. Most of the time people think that we buy a product, but really what we really buy in a product or a service is the experience. A simple example is when we buy a Tylenol. We're not buying the pill; we're buying the experience of the pain leaving us. So when we create great brands, we have to look at the experience that the user gets from consuming the product or the service of that brand. Those companies that have specialized in creating the best experience have also created the most loyal customers.

Nick: Okay, and so it's really taking the features versus benefits argument even a little further. It's basically an emotional or experiential benefit right?

Rajiv: Exactly. Instead of just making a claim, make a claim that is emotionally attaching to the

customer. That's how you build a good client base.

Nick: Okay Rajiv, can you maybe break it down a little further for people with a service business or maybe a medical professional example.

Rajiv: Sure. That's an area where making it an experience is even more important because there's no tangibility except the feeling we leave people with. Let's look at a doctor's office. The experience begins from the time patient walk into the waiting room. The way you are greeted and taken back to a room and the way your blood pressure is taken, that's all an experience. And there are certain practices that do a very good job with it and there are others that don't.

For example, pediatric dentistss create a big experience because the first thing they do is take the fear out of going into a dentist office by making the environment friendlier, a little bit more fun. In the waiting room they've got Wii games.

Nick: So it actually becomes a form of marketing and a really strong point of word-of-mouth marketing by doing that. That makes sense.

Rajiv: So much of what we do in today's world is because of the emotion it creates. In experiential branding we look past the features and benefits to what is it that they really want to *feel* or how to reduce risk.

An example of reducing risk would be toothpaste. If you went a remote area in Africa, and you ran out

of toothpaste, if you see a Colgate or a Crest, which one are you going to reach for compared to a local brand?

Nick: I'm going to reach for the Colgate or the Crest.

Rajiv: Yeah, because at that point it's not even the fact that you know anything of that. At that point you're reducing risk. Which, again, is an emotion.

Nick: So reducing risk to our advantage then. One of the triggers we can use in sales is to create a familiar option for people that actually makes them comfortable because in their mind it's helping them reduce the risk of another decision.

Rajiv: Exactly. So when we look the whole idea of experiential branding sometimes people don't understand at what level we are using an experience. One part of the experience is I don't want to feel like this again. So when you're looking at making a choice, you're looking at the choice that you don't want to go through the bad experience again. The other one side is I would love to feel this experience more.

Nick: Okay, got that.

Rajiv: Even if it's an attorney or whatever, after you've paid for the services did you feel good? Relief alone is not a feel good. Relief is just relief. Feeling good, that's the goal. One way to do this is to use an encouraging word, for example after writing a prescription if doctor said to you, "Nick, I know you're going to feel a lot better about it. I look forward to getting a call and hearing how good you feel in the next couple of days." Would that make you at least leave you with a level of encouragement?

Nick: It absolutely would.

Rajiv: The whole thing is people don't realize is service; the word service, has a very, very deep meaning and it doesn't mean I just delivered what you asked for. Service is at the end of it all did you make me feel better, improve my life or do something worthwhile where I felt good about what I gave you money for?

Nick: Right. So everything in your outbound marketing, your website, even direct mail, etc. the language, the message and the tactile feel of it must all convey the same message of a good feeling.

Rajiv: Right, try to involve as many senses as possible toward the same message. If you walked into some person's waiting room a soothing or invigorating scent can also help with recall.

Nick: That's why the Otis Spunkmeyer Cookie thing works too, right? They have the cookie oven in the office or the pharmaceutical rep brings in the Otis Spunkmeyer Cookies warm from the oven when he comes in.

Rajiv: Correct. Another sense would be sound. That's why every time you open Microsoft Windows, you hear its sound so that as soon as you turn it on you know it's one of their products. What people are trying to put in each one of these areas are things that trigger recall.

Nick: Okay, so it would be pretty safe to say that we should move straight past what we're selling to try to get to any sort of memory recall to where our products and services actually sell themselves based on the triggers we've given them. Right?

Rajiv: Correct. Beating a person down with features and benefits is not getting the job done. We are learning more and more that the mind is remembering less and less, and it isn't just ADD or old-age syndrome, it is just that with clutter the mind only remembers so much without an emotional tie.

Nick: Yep. Okay. And one of the things I think is important to note is that in serving your customer base, you need to focus on the follow-up. That's truly where a simple touch afterward makes a world difference because, quite frankly, most of the time you don't hear anything afterward. It can even be a systemized thing that someone in your office can do for you.

Rajiv: Absolutely. As I said before, people have forgotten the depth of service. Service is a big word. What you just talked about is putting the cherry on the service, the whipped cream. The whole idea is that extra step is where the experience gets cemented.

Nick: Very good. Well, cool man. I think that's a really great place for people to start. If people want to dig in a little deeper how can they find out more about you and the experiential branding?

Rajiv: They can go to Configurations.com or call me at 407-788-3070. Soon we will also be adding ExperientialBranding.com, where we will discuss more items on experiential branding.

Nick: Excellent. Thank you so much for sharing with us. I think that's awesome information that everyone will really benefit from. ★

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