

Brands and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

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I've been thinking lately a lot about how an [Enterprise Resource Planning \(ERP\)](#) system can effect your brand. I really enjoyed a recent Blog on the [1to1 Blogsite](#), published by Mila D'Antonio. Mila cited a passage in Dick Martin's book, [Rebuilding Brand America](#), where Dick said,

“.....(brand) has to be easy to understand and flexible enough to modulate in a wide variety of interactions with a large number of different audiences. Most important, it can't simply be something you stick at the end of an ad or on the side of a building. It has to be the 'golden thread' that runs through every internal process and through every interactions with customers. And your promise can't be primarily rational. It has to operate on the deeper level of emotions and feelings.”

What a great thought provoking paragraph.

This Blog was commented in yet another thought provoking way, but I have to stick with Mila and Dick's assessment, of building a beautifully run business that has your brand (or as [Kevin Roberts](#) would say, your client's brand because it really belongs to them) running throughout the entire enterprise. Every thing you do, every process you use, every conversation and client interaction, should have that honesty and sincerity that constitutes a brand.

I was reading this and was reminded of an article I read in Wired once about the CEO of [SAP](#), [Henning Kagermann](#), and how he point blank told the journalist that they don't allow diversion from the SAP way of doing things as it is proven and it works. I have to agree that SAP is a wonderful business automation system. I just wonder what happens to the brand of your company when you install such a regimented system.

Here are a few thoughts as to what happens:

It gets better, hopefully that is the case. If you invest in an ERP system and you invest in all the training, indoctrination, and implementation we all hope it pays off. I think if you do commit to an ERP system and you do a successful implementation your company's brand should only improve. An ERP system reaches to everyone in the business and a true implementation will touch everyone at some stage whether it be timesheets, KPI reports, or operations it will be now a part of your business and will in effect steer the business in the optimum direction. So what client wouldn't want that for their brand? A lot of new companies and companies that are struggling with their brand, struggling to find themselves in the marketplace, then I think change is in order and ERP can help you improve the brand.

It gets worse, is not what you want, but it could happen. As everyone knows, most ERP systems are quite expensive and I even Blogged about that recently, [click here for more on that](#). If the system needs an upgrade but the company can't afford the upgrade then you are stuck with a process that is not the best you can have. Maybe you already have a compelling and irresistible brand with the process and culture you already have installed in your company. SAP will change that culture and may impact the brand to make it less irresistible.

It may get better or worse, but it will change and if you already have an excellent brand, think twice before jumping into a regimented ERP system. Consider working with a smaller ERP consultant or software developer who is willing to build your companies personally branded ERP system.

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