

What the heck is Domo and why should you care?

If you watch as much TV/cable news and commentary as I do, chances are good that you've seen an advertisement for something called Domo. It's been running a lot over the past couple months. In case you've missed it, here it is:

Do you understand what Domo is from this commercial? Apparently it's something that allows you to "connect with anything in the company" and gives you the "company data in one place." And let's not forget, it will help Jeanne, who is always cold (huh?). The tagline on the commercial is Domo: For the good of the company.

This commercial is successful in making you wonder what Domo is, and maybe, like me, you go search it out on the web.

Take it to the internet

Some internet research into Domo reveals that it is a software company that deals in “business intelligence” and “data visualization.” A visit to Domo’s website has the description “connecting your data, systems and people” in the navigation bar. The home page has a tagline/descriptor that says: “Everybody on the same page, all the time. Run the business from your phone.”

Here you do learn more about it. When I scroll down there is a part of the home page called product benefits where I learn that Domo is “the fully-mobile, cloud-based operating system that unifies every component of a business. Data becomes decisions, ideas turn into action.” Someone needs to explain to Domo that this is not a listing of benefits, but rather an actual description of the product.

Then I click on “product” on the navbar. I get this content:

Domo creates a truly digitally-connected organization.

The sum of Domo’s parts deliver a virtuous cycle of business optimization. Everyone knows more, works together better, and gets more done, faster.

(And here we find a new contender for unintelligible business jargon: “A virtuous cycle of business optimization.”)

But what is it? And why do I care?

I don’t know about you, but I am still confused. I am confused because at no point does the ad or the website explain what exactly we are talking about and why being connected to all your data and systems in one place (apparently your phone) makes things run better.

There are so many issues both with the website messaging and with the TV commercial. The website and the commercial feature taglines, descriptors, slogans, product benefits, a product description—and none of them match up. The website prominently features a phrase that tells you you can get to everything from your phone. Is this the main selling feature?

Who should hear about it?

It's clear that the target audience for the TV commercial is a CEO or a COO of a company. We know this because we have the self-effacing female administrative assistant who starts by saying she's not the "c-anything o," and ends by saying that the CEO, to whom she is writing the email suggesting the company get Domo, is really the one who runs things.

How is it then that the lowly admin knows about this amazing product? And what I really don't get is how having data visualization on your smartphone is going to help Jeanne who is always cold?

The bottom line

Domo, with its short and easy to remember name, has succeeded in building brand recognition and perhaps even increasing its website traffic. What is less clear is if has succeeded in getting customers. There's a lot of explaining that needs to be done about what Domo actually is, how it works, and why you need it. To be successful in your branding, you need clear and consistent messaging and a strong selling proposition.

Domo has many messages and several reasons (maybe too many) for you to consider getting it.

What do you think? Do you understand Domo? Do you need Domo?

You may have noticed that the DBMC website has been spruced up a bit. During the "remodeling" I refrained from blogging so

that there would be no new content to migrate to the new site. But now I am back! Let me know what you think of the new website.

What a bad cup of coffee can teach you

Do you always start your day with a extra-big mugful of coffee like I do? If so, you'll appreciate just how terrible it is to start your day with a bad cup of coffee. A cup of coffee that lacks the delicious aroma of perfectly roasted coffee beans. A cup of coffee that just tastes awful.

A bad cup of coffee just gets your day off to a bad start, and for that I blame myself. You see, I had just finished a package of coffee and needed a replacement ASAP (it is a DEFCON 5 situation around here if there is no coffee). Normally, I buy my coffee at Trader Joe's but I had forgotten to do so during my weekly shopping trip. And so I found myself shopping in a gourmet store for something else, and thought I would pick up a brand of coffee that I enjoy (and for which I am willing to pay a little extra). Apparently, this store no longer carries that brand. They did have another brand that I have tried in the past, but I didn't feel like paying the gourmet store price for it.

So I made a very big mistake: I grabbed a bag of coffee simply because it was cheap. It was not a brand I knew or recognized or had even seen before, but I figured a bag of

medium roast Costa Rican coffee from a gourmet store can't be all that bad. Well, I figured wrong. It was the worst coffee I have ever bought in my life. It tasted horrible. It had no coffee aroma. It was so bad I actually threw what was left out.

Then I hustled over to Trader Joe's and bought my go-to coffee. Now, my mornings are back to normal.

A bad cup of coffee taught me never to buy an unknown brand. And it's really not about the cost. You can get very good yet cheap store-brand coffee like I do at Trader Joe's or at stores like Target, *where you trust the brand*.

Brands are quite literally markers that serve to identify. They let you separate one product from all the others like it. Once you've experienced a brand, you can then look for it if you liked it or avoid it if you didn't. *Brands provide a shortcut* that consumers can use to know what to buy quickly and without much research.

Remember this the next time you are out of coffee: Unless it's a brand you know already, buying just anything based on price alone will get your morning started on the wrong foot.

Do you know what your brand stands for? Are you communicating it well enough? If not, perhaps you should invest in my new Brand Identity Kit. Check it out!

When your customers don't know who you are

This morning, I came across an article on EaterDC about the new Isabella Eatery food hall at Tyson's Galleria in McLean, Virginia: Gargantuan Isabella Eatery is Confusing Customers. It seems that although some of the elements of the food hall get good reviews for quality and design, customers don't know what to make of the whole thing. It seems that Isabella Eatery is offering so much that its customers no longer know what Isabella stands for. (Some background: Mike Isabella was a contestant on Top Chef. Later he went on to open up Graffiato, an Italian restaurant in Washington, DC and later a Italian sandwich shop called G by Mike Isabella. He then expanded into Greek food with three Kapnos restaurants, and then into Spanish food with Arroz. He heads up a company called Mike Isabella Concepts, which also operates a French restaurant, a Mexican restaurant and the aforementioned food hall.)

Something for every one?

And then there's the local pizza chain with the catchy jingle that says it offers "something for every one." The place is called [name] Pizza, and its current TV commercials show pictures of a burger and fries. Because, of course, if you want a burger and fries you'd call a pizza delivery place, right?

Jack of all trades, master (brander) of none

When you seek to please everyone by offering tons of choices, you end up pleasing no one.

In terms of branding and marketing, when you offer so many choices (and in Isabella's case, cuisines and restaurants) you are violating the first two of *The 22 Immutable Laws of*

Branding by Al Ries and Laura Ries. The first law says that your brand loses its power when you expand your scope, and the second, which really is the inverse of the first, is that having more focus strengthens your brand.

A strong brand is focused, a weak brand is not. It seems to me that Mike Isabella is expanding at the expense of his brand. And the pizza place? Well I don't think it would be anyone's first choice for pizza *or* for burgers.

Your brand is your mark of distinction. How well are you communicating it? If you need help with your branding, check out my new Brand Identity Kit.

Do you fly a brand?

Do you ever choose to fly an airline because of its brand identity? Or, do you choose your flight based on schedule/price? I bet it's more than the latter than the former, but if all things are close, you may choose the brand you like the most.

Last week, I took my first flight on Virgin America. I was going out to San Francisco and Virgin flies from Washington to SFO at least twice a day. I had heard good things, and I thought that Virgin, like Southwest or JetBlue, was a lower cost carrier. Well, it really isn't. Virgin charges a

comparable price to the other major carrier (United) flying to San Francisco from this area. And like United, Virgin charges for bags. Unlike United, Virgin charges for in-flight movies (\$8 a pop). Virgin also charges for food, snacks and for premium (like Honest Tea) and alcoholic beverages. Pretty much the only thing that you can get for “free” is water, coffee and soda. But you order all of these items on demand, from your seat, via an in-flight on-screen ordering system. You want more water, you “order” it.

And there are other differences. The seats are leather, there’s more legroom, and the cabin has a purple light. The flight attendants seem a bit younger and “cooler” than most, and there is definitely no in-flight magazine (because print is so yesterday). But what is really different is the safety video. Take a look:

<http://youtu.be/DtyfiPIHsIg>

Read more about how this video heralded a new brand strategy for Virgin America in Fast Company.

It seems that even though Virgin America basically nickels and dimes its passengers, **people enjoy flying with the airline**. It just feels different—more fun and more hip. Even the vibe at the airport was different. Virgin shares a terminal with American at SFO. The Virgin side had funky chairs and work tables (with plug-in terminals). Lot of people were working at their laptops, with headphones on. Very few (if any) screaming children. Only one wheelchair request. The feeling was more tech-y, hip and relaxed. The American side felt darker, more stressed, more old-school.

The real difference may also be customer service. Our flight out of Washington-Dulles was delayed by two hours due to the huge storm that hit the Bay Area last week. The people at the podium immediately set to help out anybody who needed/wanted to change their flight plans. One of the crew brought out

snack carts and gave out free water and snacks. Everybody seemed calm. There was no grouching. A woman in the waiting area across from me told me she travels Virgin to California all the time for work. She told me it was rare for there to be a delay. She herself had connections out of SFO, and had to change her flight. She got on the phone with Virgin, and they were able to accommodate her. She was going to leave the next day, but when she left, she did not seem upset. The airline had taken care of her. The delay was not Virgin's fault, but rather Mother Nature's. Virgin worked hard to lessen the impact of the delay and to accommodate its passengers (or guests as they call them).

Now, would I fly Virgin again? Most likely. I would know to bring food on-board though, and maybe a movie on my smartphone. It would still depend on price and schedule, but all things being equal, Virgin wins out. It just felt better.

What about you? Do you fly an airline because you like what it stands for? Let me know in the comments.

UPDATE

I just came across this post on the Wonkblog on the Washington Post, which lists airlines on how often they lose your luggage. Virgin America is last on the list (loses the least amount of luggage). Now that may be because fewer people check their bags, or because Virgin is better. Either way, it is a good reason to fly an airline.

Is having a point of

differentiation enough?

Last night, I met a friend for dinner. He chose a Thai place that was half-way between his place and mine. Upon reading some reviews online, I found out that this is the only Thai place in the area that's Halal, that is, observes Muslim dietary rules.

When I got there last night, it was empty save for a couple of people. Few people came in until a outwardly observant Muslim family came in. When they were done eating and had left, the owner pretty much closed up shop and kicked my friend and me out. From the time we had arrived at 6:30 p.m. until we left, no more than ten other customers had been in the restaurant.

The food at this Thai place was not very good. In fact, it was mediocre. It wasn't spicy enough, or attractively presented enough or even interesting enough. They did not have Thai standards like green papaya salad or red curry. Based on the food alone, I would not go back.

The only relevant differentiator this Thai restaurant offers is that it's Halal. Is that enough? **Can you have one strong point of differentiation and have that keep your business alive? Well, the answer is yes, but there is an "if" attached.** In this case, you could have Halal as your point of differentiation ONLY IF your food is on par with other similar restaurants.

In a world where there are multiple offerings for everything (many organic grocery stores, tons of sushi restaurants, hundreds of nail salons), **you have to meet the standard or exceed it AND then find your point of differentiation.** For example, if you have a nail salon, not only do have to comply with sanitary guidelines required by law, but you should find something that your competition does not have (the most colors, the most comfortable chairs, etc.).

What do you think? Is having a point of differentiation enough?

It's all about personality

One of my favorite lines from a movie is this one, from Pulp Fiction:

"A pig's got personality. Personality goes a long way."

-Jules Winnfield (played by Samuel L. Jackson)

It seems the folks at Spike TV's Bar Rescue didn't think personality went a long way when they remade Silver Spring's Piratz Tavern into the very generic Corporate Bar and Grill. As I commented here on the blog, I didn't give the corporate makeover good chances of succeeding, and apparently neither did Piratz Tavern's owners. The Washington Post is reporting today that the bar's owners, Tracy and Juciano Rebelo are getting rid of the makeover and re-launching Piratz Tavern today.

The Washington Post article says this:

The bigger problem, however, was the tavern's new identity, designed to attract Silver Spring's corporate worker bees. The new place seemed to do just the opposite: It became a cruel joke among a number of locals.

After reading the article, I have concluded that the Bar Rescue team did have some genuine concerns about Piratz Tavern (to do with management style and food quality) but that their solution eliminated the only thing that made Piratz Tavern

stand out—its personality. Remember, personality does go a long way.

Piratz, burgers and lost pizzazz

Did you catch my blog post last week on what I consider a rebranding #fail for Piratz Tavern? Robert Freeland did, and he shared his thoughts with me (and I thought I would share them with you, with his permission of course)

Hi Deborah,

I agree with your prediction that the Corporate Bar and Grill angle Spike TV's "Bar Rescue" guru, Jon Taffer, thinks will save the sputtering Piratz Tavern will die its own death. The first article I read about the makeover had Taffer proclaiming the need for an "executive burger" joint in Silver Spring...whatever an executive burger is.

I've had plenty of enjoyable times and grogs at PT, and will miss its one-of-a-kind shtick. The thing that displaced it attempts to strongarm pretention into a dive...an antithetical marriage, like matter and antimatter...Boom! I think Taffer missed the one about understanding a region's audience before dictating what they need.

I walked past CB&G this evening, after leaving a very-packed

Quarry House across the street (where the burgers are great). It was open but dead, consistent with your forecast. Ground beef and low inventory rotation don't get along well.

Best,

Robert Freeland

We'll keep tabs on the new place, but unless "executives" develop a taste for these burgers, AND flock there religiously every lunch, I doubt the new place will survive. These days, competition is stiff for any dollars. How do you stand out from a crowd? In this case, the shtick was the attraction. Substituting a generic experience in a place with little foot traffic is a sure-fire way to lose business.

Katie Aberbach at expressnightout.com seems to agree in her post Walked the Plank. What do you think will happen?

The weekly communications #fail: rebranding gone wrong

Yesterday, as I was reading The Washington Post, I came across this item, regarding a makeover for a Silver Spring, MD bar.

The bar, formerly known as Piratz Tavern, was targeted by Spike TV to be redone. Apparently, the bar's sales had been slumping and the owners appealed to the "Bar Rescue" show. Piratz had a pirate theme—the waitstaff dressed up as pirates,

there was rum, and “pirate-themed” food. The decor was pirate-casual (you know, skulls on the wall-like).

In comes the Bar Rescue staff and Piratz Tavern becomes, are you ready for this? Corporate Bar and Grill, serving gourmet burgers to executives not interested in being pretend pirates.

Corporate Bar and Grill? Seriously? Could they have chosen a more generic name? A more generic menu? I am not a betting person, but I would bet that this won't result in higher earnings, except if they are charging much more for these executive burgers.

Perhaps what Piratz needed was not a complete rebranding to become a generic grill, but instead, an effective way to market a quirky spot that is a bit out of the way for foot traffic. If foot traffic was the issue before, it will still be an issue now, regardless of whether the food is better.

If you have something different, I think you should exploit it. Becoming just like everyone else is rarely a way to get ahead of the crowd. Becoming more generic is this week's communications #fail.

You may be overlooking something

If you blog, for yourself or for your organization, do you know what your blog looks like to the outside world? How are your readers seeing you? Are they subscribing in a reader, via email or just visiting your blog? Are those visitors sharing your blog? If so, how are they doing it?

(Caffeinated tip of a few days ago was to make sure your blog is shareable.)

Many bloggers out there, including those that blog for large organizations, are NOT checking to see how their blog looks. I can tell you because there are several I follow in my Google Reader. Here are several fixable mistakes these bloggers are making:

- Duplicating entries
- Having no title appear for the blog or having a generic title like “Most Recent Entries.”
- No sharing button
- Sharing button that does not fill in information when you share so the post only has a link and no title.
- Only sharing the first line of the post
- Not allowing sharing from the reader
- Not having a visible RSS feed or email subscription tab on your blog

Happily, all these are fixable. Start by following your own blog via RSS feed in a reader and via email subscription. Use your sharing button to see how (and if) it works. You may be overlooking something that will turn off one of your readers. You should probably view the blog on someone else’s computer too.

You may be overlooking something. Protect your brand and your blog!

Don’t buy your own PR

In the age of self-publishing and social media, it’s easy to put out information about your brand or yourself out there.

It's easy to gain "followers." The lack of filters makes it easy to connect directly with people. But that doesn't mean that what you are saying is true. Keep that in mind. Just because you put in on your blog and somebody shared it on Twitter DOES NOT MAKE IT FACTUAL OR TRUE OR EVEN RIGHT. It just means that someone liked what you have to say.

In fact, just yesterday the disheveled leader of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmanidejad, claimed to the United Nations General Assembly that the U.S. was behind the 9-11 attacks and that most of the world believes that. To a rational person, this is hogwash, and yet there are nutcases out there who agree with this maniac. **Let me emphasize again: having followers does not make you right or true.**

Many people and companies are falling prey to the lure of large numbers. They believe that because they have large numbers of followers, they are "all that." They may be, but they should question it. Just today, I read a blog post by a book author, talking about herself and her concentration. It was purported to be about happiness, but it really was all about her. Another popular blog shared this morning what the blog author does as a morning routine, as if this is what we all need to do. What is happening is that because it was easy to get ideas out there, and to get positive publicity for such ideas, these people believe that everyone cares and everyone agrees with them. But that is just not accurate.

I am not saying that you should not self-publicize or promote yourself or your brand. **I am just saying you should not fall prey to the numbers game. Just because you have supporters does not mean everyone supports you** (go over to the Washington Post and read what happened to Mayor Adrian Fenty if you want a real-life example of buying your own PR at the expense of a reality check).

If I can paraphrase a famous line: publicity corrupts, absolute publicity corrupts absolutely.

(And for some comic relief, read Christopher Elliott's interview with Delta's head of customer service, who thinks Delta has the best customer service. Clearly, she hasn't flown Delta.)

