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**Mohammed Shahedul Quader<sup>1</sup> and Shanewaz Mahmood Sohel<sup>2</sup>**

**<sup>1</sup>Department of Marketing, University of Chittagong, Bangladesh; <sup>2</sup>Department of Human Resource Management, University of Chittagong**

### Abstract

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the service sector industry plays a more domineering role than manufacturing. As a result, a dynamic service-oriented approach to marketing emerges, where perceptions of a brand are significantly influenced by the staff. The difference between competing brands is not only based on functional factors, but also emotional factors. Staff are critical to build and maintain a sustainable brand, and require in-depth knowledge and skills, which together with support activities, deliver the brand values. Staff should be recruited who genuinely believe in the brand's values and who work together to build the brand. Firms should create a favourable organisational culture and gain the support of both core staff and third party suppliers who deliver the brand promise. The aim of this study is to investigate how to use branding as a tool to communicate the message to customers in a consistent manner and deliver functional and emotional brand promises. The research was carried out for NB Entrust and aims to be a catalyst for change for the company. NB Entrust has a strong B2B service business model, but there is concern that it will be imitated by competitors, and thus staff are the valuable differentiating factor. The results from the holistic brand positioning audit and brand leadership survey show that NB needs to: unify its culture, develop future leaders as brand champions, and communicate brand values more effectively to stakeholders.

**Key words:** B2B, Brand, Experience, Services, Case Study

## **Introduction**

Profitable Industrial or B2B brands provide customer solutions through relationship marketing, industrial networks and personal selling. Traditionally, the decision making process is rational and based on functional factors, which include price, product specification, delivery, quality consistency, supplier reliability and customer service. More recent brand literature has highlighted the emotional elements of branding based on intangible emotive characteristics, such as trust, reassurance, reputation, image, and responsiveness. These are seen as being more durable and are less likely to suffer from competitive erosion (Lynch and Chernatony, 2004). As B2B markets emphasise ongoing relationships, marketers need to build connections with customers. In reality, companies act just like people when it comes to evaluating and making the final buying decision. B2B buyers are overwhelmed with choices, features, benefits, information, data, and metrics. Furthermore, there is an asymmetry between the upside and downside of B2B purchases: as the buyer does not experience the full benefit of the solution directly, and may, or not, be rewarded for making a good purchase. However, a bad purchase can destroy the seller's reputation. Both functional and emotional elements have a role to play in delivering brand value in a B2B context (Bendixen et al., 2004; Lynch and De Chernatony, 2007; Jensen and Klastrup, 2008). Therefore, successful B2B brands should consider the importance of both functional and emotional aspects in the service-dominated economy.

## **Research Problem and Question**

When combining all the definitions of a brand together, branding affects all areas of a company, and should be thought of as an overarching management strategy. While branding effectively occurs in the mind of the customer, which makes customers the key in creating the brand and in driving today's marketing system, a more balanced perspective is needed, which also focuses on staff. If staff are genuinely committed to a set of values, they are then more likely to deliver the brand's promise. Problems arise when messages and promises are not communicated to customers by employees in a consistent manner (Kalus and Maklan, 2007). This study explores how to use branding as a strategic tool for an organisation to be in alignment to deliver these promises. In order to develop a branding approach based on B2B service concepts, we must focus on the customer experience and the research question, which is: **how can a B2B service business create a branded experience to differentiate their service offering?**

## **Methodology**

From the research-philosophy point of view, this is a phenomenological research and in this respect, Gray (2013) argued that this approach of research aims to emphasise inductive logic with systematic interpretation, which mostly depends on the qualitative evaluation of data with contextual description and constructive analysis. Furthermore, in terms of epistemological consideration, it is justified to consider an interpretive phenomenological approach to examine individuals' experiences regarding strategic brand and how they make sense and agree with the

different outcomes regarding the brand building issue (Bryman and Bell, 2011). From the perspective of ontology, a constructivist position was developed. The grounds for this are that it implies social phenomena and categories which are not only produced through social interaction, but are also in a constant state of revision (Bryman and Bell, 2011), and interacting with interviewees would help to understand the social phenomena being studied.

To explore the critical issues regarding strategic brand mechanism, a specific case study has been considered to achieve a thorough understanding of the real world situation. According to Yin (2014), the case study method “is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. It is also true that case study is an “extremely flexible method” (Burton, 2000), a good tool for obtaining a better understanding of the dynamics of the company (Gummesson, 2000; Cronin, 2014), and it also allows researchers to study many different aspects, examine them in relation to each other, and view the process in its total environment.

### ***Personal Interviews***

From a small number of in-depth interviews, qualitative primary research was carried out to discover fundamental issues. Although this research will not provide an exact measurement of these factors, it does, however, ensure that a full comprehension exists of what really matters. The interviews were recorded where possible, rather than taking notes in real time, which allowed for a more conversational type exchange. Given the exploratory nature of the research, respondents were encouraged to talk freely on views within their own frames of reference. Questions varied for each respondent, but were centred on the ways in which brand values are identified, communicated, and preserved. Fourteen interviews were carried out, with a duration varying from 30 minutes to two hours, with the average being one hour. A diverse range of respondents were selected to obtain a well-rounded sample of all stakeholders' views.

### ***Online survey***

The survey was inspired by Ulrich and Smallwood's (2007) Harvard Business Review article entitled “Building a leadership brand”. A leadership brand consists of people who embody the brand and successfully deliver the brand values to customers. Using principles discussed above, questions were adapted to the nature of NB Entrust's business with regards to company identity and management actions in association with employees, supplier partners, and customers. The same set of ten statements was sent to both collector groups, who were asked whether they agree with each statement on a scale of one to five; from strongly disagree, to strongly agree. A total of 60 people were divided into two collector groups of 12 Board of Directors and 48 NB Entrust headquarters employees who had been chosen to participate in the survey. The survey was designed to use straightforward language to convey complex ideas.

## **Secondary data**

Relevant secondary information was generated from various sources, such as academic journals, text books, annual reports, and, etc., to develop a theoretical base and a systematic logical interpretation.

## **Literature review**

### ***The Meaning of Brand***

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Beverland et al., 2007; Kotler and Keller, 2014). A brand is a cluster of functional and emotional values that promises a unique and welcome emotional experience for its stakeholders. The success of a brand depends on the extent to which there is harmony between the managerially-defined values, effective implementation of values by staff, and appreciation of these values amongst customers (De Chernatony et al., 2006). A brand includes all of the associations, perceptions, and experiences an interested party has when interacting with a company, whether it be a product, service, or conversation with a friend at the water dispenser. Therefore, the brand becomes not only a name, logo, and tagline, but also the relationship a customer and the company have at every touch point (Morrison, 2001). A brand is emotional, has a personality, and captures the heart and minds of its customers. Great brands survive attacks from competitors and market trends, because of the strong connections they forge with customers, (Kotler and Pfoertsch, 2007; Holt, 2003) and they also guarantee a steady flow of earning (Pearson, 2016). To build a sustainable brand requires constructive planning and coordinated synergetic marketing actions (Kujala et al., 2011), which aim to fulfil functional and emotional needs of existing and prospective customers.

### ***Marketing from a Service Dominant View***

Traditionally, brand management has focused on understanding customer behaviours so that a unique mix of values can be devised to enhance customers' lifestyles (De Chernatony, 2010). However, with the growth of the service sector and the importance of services in product-based brands, a customer's increased level of interaction with staff provides powerful clues about brand values. It is therefore argued that brand management requires a balanced view, looking at the value created by both a firm's employees and their customers together (Abratt and Motlana, 2002). Vargo and Lusch (2004) put forward the concept that service is the undeniable core of every marketing interaction. A new dominant logic for marketing has emerged, which shifts the focus from tangible to intangible resources, from frozen value to co-created value, and from transactions to relationships. Thus, every value proposition for any business becomes an offer of service. They describe the foundational premises of the prevailing paradigm as follows:

- Skills and knowledge is the fundamental unit of exchange. There is potential for co-creation of value and for sharing competencies between the firm, customers, suppliers, and other market players.
- Customers are the judge of the value of a service. The firm's goal is a customise offerings; to recognise that the consumer is always a co-producer and to strive to maximise consumer involvement in the customisation to better fit their needs.
- Goods are distribution mechanisms for service provision. What a firm essentially does in its marketing activity, is to offer value propositions or promises and assemble resources together for customers (Kapferer, 2012).

Rather than firms marketing 'to' customers, they market 'with' customers (an interaction process). The bottom line is that the marketing exchange becomes a set of interactive activities across time and is no longer transaction bound (King, 2007). This requires a managerial focus on the customer and employee interaction process.

### ***B2B Services Characteristics***

It is essential to examine the complex nature of the characteristics that make up the B2B service experience. Services can take many forms - they can supplement a product, suppliers may sell services rather than products, or subcontractors may provide service capabilities to customers (Frei, 2008). Services can be continuous, such as leasing mall space to retail tenants, or discrete, such as the management of consulting projects. B2B services are different from products when it comes to their classification, which is based on characteristic such as: (a) Intangibility (Berry, 1980); (b) Inseparability (Beverland et al., 2007; Klaus and Maklan, 2007); (c) Heterogeneity (Klaus and Maklan, 2007; Berry, 1980); (d) Perishability (Mudie and Cottam, 2010; Frei, 2008), and; (e) Lack of Ownership (Mudie and Cottam, 2010).

### ***Relationship Management***

The open-ended nature of brand relationships means that individual perceptions of a brand (the meanings that become associated with a brand mark) are part of a brand's wider stakeholder associations, whether based on direct first-hand experience, or through indirect experience that can be shared or circulated in communicative interaction (Ballantyne and Aitken, 2007). A B2B service firm has at least two relationships - those with their suppliers and partners, and those with end-users and customers (Gomes et al., 2016). These relationships are continuous and help portray how the brand is perceived, which is why investing efforts in them is of great importance.

### **- Suppliers and Partners**

The B2B service network has been defined as being two or more entities connected formally or informally, which directly provide a range of resources and activities that create value and help customers solve short or long term problems (Morgan et al., 2007). If all outsourced functions were brought in house within the focal (selling) firm, then the supply chain would cease to exist. By outsourcing or partnering with other firms to perform certain activities targeted towards customers, B2B firms engage in service networks. Morgan et al. (2007) examined the relationship where two or more entities that jointly provide a service experience to a customer. Specialisation in the marketplace creates interdependence among providers, where the focal firm will form partnerships with subcontractors to compete more competitively. Lamons (2005) postulated that because of the intrinsically difficult nature of managing the activities of service providers not under the organisation's direct control, the service network represents unique challenges for managers. Consumer perceptions of services co-produced by multiple providers can have important brand-building implications, as a service delivered by a third party can affect the brand strength and/or image of the focal firm.

### **- End Users and Customers**

In a B2B service environment, company staff and their suppliers and partners are not the only parties involved. The customer's presence and input influences their own experiences and often other customer's experiences as well. Ultimately, the boundaries of an experience are subject to the interpretation of the customer, whereby the experience starts and ends when the customer perceives it does. The experience concludes when the functional and emotional outcome of the service are realised (Morgan et al., 2007). Service companies do not have the luxury to decide whether or not to engage with the customer experience. It cannot be stressed enough that in a service business, employees and customers are both part of the value creation process. B2B marketing is essentially about building and maintaining relationships with customers. At its most limited form, Klaus and Maklan (2007) state that service marketing deconstructs customer service into a series of discrete occasions and further divides each occasion into small measurable incidents that can be managed through an almost manufacturing-like quality process, with targets for the number of times the phone rings, excessive scripting of customer-facing employees, or the length of time to respond to a letter. Blomback and Axelsson (2007) reveal that customer retention is the central objective in relationship marketing, and it is regarded as one of the most powerful ways of growing a business.

### **The Role of a Brand**

Brands are powerful entities, because they blend functional performance-based values with emotional values. In order to lever brand investments, managers create consumer trust in the brand's functional superiority and then seek to build consumers' appreciation of particular

emotional values (De Chernatony, 2010). The real success for most B2B firms lies in the added value associated with superior service, rather than the elements of the marketing mix. Good service drives customer satisfaction, promotes customer loyalty, and is thus a key defensive marketing strategy (Berry et al., 2002). The brand as a business strategy helps a company create differentiation for the purpose of gaining competitive advantage (Shahri, 2011) and establish a positive image in a competitive market (Dumitriu, 2012). In addition, a positive brand image stimulates future firm-customer relational exchanges and customer loyalty through building trust in a customer's mind (Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh, 2016)

### **- Can anything be branded?**

Because industrial customers are believed to be more rational and they demand more customisation than individual consumers, branding efforts were thought to be of little use. In business marketing, products hold no value in and of themselves - rather they represent solutions or services for customers (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Value is the benefit customers receive in relation to the total costs incurred in acquiring the service (Kumar and Reinartz, 2016.) Some services offerings may be considered commodities, as the service provided is standardised, or because many of the large suppliers of such services have similar reputations (level of trust and standing with stakeholders), pricing structures, or service standards (suppliers' service representatives have the same level of training and qualifications). As a result, B2B customers are likely to face a more complex buying decision, to look for longer-term relationships with key suppliers, to focus more on the ongoing benefits from product adoption, and to seek some meaningful points of difference that are not quantifiable (Beverland et al., 2007).

### **- Brand Vision and Values**

Central to any brand is its vision, which provides a clear sense of direction for the future of a company. Achieving this future depends on a culture where staff believe in particular values and where managers have a common understanding of how their market works and therefore how the brand must be developed (Lehner and Halliday, 2014). The core-thinking behind a brand can now be translated into a positioning strategy that manifests the brand's functional values and a personality which brings the brand's emotional values to life (De Chernatony, 2010). Underpinning all of this is a clear understanding among staff about the types of relationships they need to have with each other, customers, and other stakeholders to portray the brand's values. Kakabadse et al. (2005) describe three stages of the brand visioning process, as follows:

- The first stage is formulating a vision. Employees should be engaged and included during this stage, as by being ignored and having a vision imposed on them, there may be those who grudgingly accept the vision, or worse, those who do not outright reject the vision, but are apathetic towards brand initiatives.

- To ensure that this drives actions, the second stage of articulating and communicating the brand vision is critical. A powerful vision can only be appreciated if it is widely disseminated and expressed in clear crisp terms.
- The third stage mandates that all levels of staff need to be given the necessary support systems and empowerment to make changes which bring about the brand vision.

Once the brand vision is in place, core values for the brand must be identified which enable an organisation to be clear about why it is different. Core values can be considered timeless definitions of the brand's beliefs (De Chernatony, 2010). However, one of the issues when conceiving a brand's values is to ensure that they are unique and that they are not generic values of the category within which the brand competes.

### **- Brand Strategy**

Formulating pragmatic brand building strategy is a difficult task for marketers (Thimmaiah, 2013; Vernuccio, and Vescovi, 2016), due to the fact that complexity exists within the changing competitive market structure (Kornberger, 2010). Branding strategy is a mechanism adopted by firms to match their brand's name with their products (Laforet and Saunders, 1999), and by doing so, firms present themselves and create a desirable reputation (Shahri, 2011). To achieve service excellence, trade-offs are necessary, because there needs to be a balance between service levels and the return of value for money for both customers and shareholders. According to Frei (2008), a firm chooses between excellence paired with inferior performance on one hand, and mediocrity across all dimensions on the other. In today's service economy, it is nearly impossible to design a service model to cover a huge range of customers and still remain competitive for all of them. It is better to avoid the misguided desire to offer the best service to all customers and instead focus on offering a better service and closer contact with fewer customers. Companies that try to do it all are vulnerable to attacks by highly-focused entrants, who target niche businesses. The best defence is to concentrate on multiple niches, strengthened by economies of scale gained through internal shared services. Onkvisit and Shaw (1989) argue that a successful firm should pursue multiple niches with optimised service models, each designed to achieve excellence in certain dimensions, at the expense of inferior performance on others.

### **- The Value of a Brand**

Holt (2003) argued that the value of a brand is the difference between what a consumer will pay for a branded entity and a physically-identical product or service without a certain brand culture. This difference is made up of four values, namely: (a) reputation value; (b) relationship value; (c) experiential value, and; (d) symbolic value. As a result of all of these added values, Morrison (2001) argued that a brand is an asset, which needs investment, management, and maintenance. The frightening truth is that while a brand is an asset, it is not owned or controlled by the company, but by the customers, employees, and the people who have perceptions of it.

## **Brand Evaluation**

This section provides a framework in which to evaluate the brand of the case study company in the next chapter. First, the holistic brand positioning model will put forward a template to audit the brand. Second, issues of how to build a leadership brand will be considered for future success.

### **- Holistic Brand Positioning**

While external market research is considered a necessity for a firm to position its brand, the results can be so voluminous and ill-focused that its practical relevance may not be so immediately apparent. The holistic branding process allows for precise identification of major issues that, although originating internally in one dimension, have repercussions in others (Schmidt and Ludlow, 2002). Businesses with a strong brand positioning benefit from a clarity of focus that provides them with effectiveness, efficiency, and competitive advantage across operations (Clifton, 2009). Branding is about delivering a consistent message and this is particularly appropriate in the management of service brands because, ideally, every employee and consumer touch point should reinforce a firm's brand values to move the brand from the rational, undifferentiated, and impersonal spaces which many B2B brands occupy. Adapted from Schmidt and Ludlow (2002), this study uses the holistic brand positioning model to discover the main ways B2B service brands can make staff and consumers aware of brand values, namely through: organisational culture, employee behaviour, service offering, communications, design of the brand, and their competitive market environment.

### **- Building a Leadership Brand**

A leadership brand is based on marketplace expectations of the behaviour of a company's representatives. According to Ulrich and Smallwood (2007), building a leadership brand consists of several basic considerations, which are: (a) leaders must master strategy - they need to have a point of view about the future and be able to position the firm for continued success with customers; (b) to ensure that managers internalise external constituents' high expectations of the firm; (c) once a company has defined the statement of a leadership brand, it then needs to continually evaluate individuals to make sure that they are living up to the stated expectations of the brand; (d) invest in broad-based leadership development to help managers master the skills required to meet customer and investor expectations, and; (e) track the firm's success at building a leadership brand over the long term.

All of this effort requires setting examples, involvement, and genuine commitment from senior management. It is crucial to align brand and business strategy, which is something that can only effectively be done if the brand is monitored closely and championed by the top management of an organisation (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2012). Boards of Directors need to encourage the building of leadership brands; senior executives need to sponsor leadership brand initiatives, and;

HR professionals need to design and facilitate programmes that foster leadership brands. King (2007) outlines the necessary conditions for all staff to act efficiently as brand builders, which are: (a) no barriers should exist between HR and marketing and the criteria used for selection and evaluation of internal employees should take into account an individual's skill in reflecting, contributing to, and presenting the external corporate brand; (b) there should be a full programme explaining the brand strategy to all members of the staff and also the staff's reactions to modify the strategy should be monitored; (c) employee communication should be derived from brand building and the planning of the company brand values, and; (d) what the best brands represent is a common culture - common aims, standards, language, approaches and style, in effect, a common personality, rather than a book of rules. A company brand cannot succeed if individuals are not allowed to take any initiatives or are not given autonomy.

### **- A Critical Systematic and Strategic Brand Building Approach**

Those marketers who are actively involved in B2B marketing are struggling to gain competitive advantage by giving importance to strategic brand experiences, because 'brand experience' influence buyers' satisfaction and loyalty' (Walter et al., 2013). Business buyers do not only expect a number of functional benefits from a brand, but also a certain level of emotional experiences (Zarantonello, and Schmitt, 2010). To bridge the gap between theories and practices related to brand experience, marketers need to address two critical questions, namely; a) how brand experience can be evaluated, and; b) how it effects role behaviour, role expectations, and the role relationship (Webster, 1995) of the members in the buying centre (e.g., initiator, user, buyer, influencer, decider, approver, gatekeeper) of an organisation (Walter et al, 2013). In the dynamic and competitive B2B market, brands are considered to offer a critical and crucial point of differentiation, and a systematic approach needs to be followed in order to gain sustainable competitive advantage (Beverland, 2005; Lamons, 2005). It is essential that professional marketers apply a systematic and strategic approach by ensuring synergy among a number of interdependent critical components, such as: brand identity; brand value; brand experience; brand positioning; brand equity, and; brand asset for building a sustainable brand in the competitive B2B market, as these components have a chain effect relationship (Maury and Mishra 2012). In practice, business buyers behave more critically and rationally before making any purchase decisions than end consumers, and they demand greater customisation (Beverland et al., 2007). The B2B service sector is, by nature, very sensitive. The business market offers several types of core components: product; service; logistics; advice, and; adaptation (Ford et al., 2006). These first three components (product, service, and logistics) are often imitated by competitors, whereas the other two components (advice and adaptation) are difficult to imitate and they reflect intangible capabilities. The intangible components of the business offer have become critically important (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015) 'for managers to draw upon a host of products or end services from within the firm to deliver upon on the brand promise' (Walter et al, 2013). Each of these components play a critical role in establishing brand experience to differentiate the B2B service offerings. From a B2B marketing point of view, the buyer's level of involvement is obviously

critical in a complex buying situation - it is the basis on which brand identity, brand value, and brand experience are driven by more intangible, integrated components. Thus, a systematic critical approach is required to achieve synergy among brand building strategies to track the evaluation of business buyers' needs and purchase requirements over time, and to ensure that brand experience reflects their expectations (Walter et al, 2013).

## **Case Study of NB Entrust**

### **Company Overview**

NB Real Estate Group (formally Nelson Bakewell) is a privately-owned firm which provides UK commercial property management services for large investment portfolios. NB manages approximately 12,500 tenants in 6,000 properties, consisting of over 100 million square feet.

In March 2007, NB Entrust was formed as a new business within NB Real Estate Group. It was created by a 50/50 joint-venture between NB and The Asset Factor. NB Entrust currently operates in 600 NB managed buildings. It is a premium branded facilities management service, which provides proven expertise and bulk purchasing power, with tailored packages to enhance the business value of property, to both the investor and the occupier. NB Entrust's systems and processes have been developed from the corporate services world and have been adapted for the property management industry. They refer to tenants as customers, and this subtle change is an important distinguishing factor of the NB Entrust philosophy. NB Entrust internally manages the delivery of services for its buildings as a facilities management integrator. It outsources the delivery of the direct services to specialist providers in four key fields: mechanical and electrical fabric maintenance; cleaning; security, and; landscaping.

Previous to the joint-venture, the company used over 1,000 suppliers under the original Sackville Resource Management format, and it was consistently making a loss. Now under NB Entrust, the number of suppliers has been reduced down to nine principal supplier partners, and the aim is to increase this to no more than 20 different companies, supplying at least 80% of its spend. This results in economies of scale and management efficiencies which allow NB Entrust to purchase services at preferential rates and thereby pass on the associated savings and deliver value to both landlords and tenants. Turnover for financial year ending in September 2007 was approximately £36.2 million for NB Real Estate Group, of which NB Entrust contributed 18.9%. The group as a whole made a pre-tax loss of £2.5 million in the same year.

### **Facilities Management**

NB Entrust is in the facilities management (FM) business. Recent research divides FM into two classifications: hard FM - property maintenance management (the physical building), and; soft FM – the management of support services (the people). It should not be underestimate that FM is as much a people-oriented business, and therefore soft issues are crucial in improving the quality of

an organisation. This basically includes managing people's performances and enhancing their skills and competencies to reach stated targets. From an FM point of view, this should include better integration with the core services staff, in order to provide an effective and responsive service (Olomolaiye et al., 2004). It is commonly accepted that FM has a strong tendency to be technically-oriented and reactive. This is in contrast with the proactive service orientation called for by the very idea of facilities management, whereby it is a service that creates a conducive environment for the achievement of end users' core business objectives (Olomolaiye et al., 2004). FM encompasses a vast spectrum of perspectives regarding people, organisations, and change processes to realize the value of any organisation. There is a strong link between human resources management and facilities management (Amaratunga et al., 2000).

FM has always been at the bottom of the property management chain, and is demeaned as being "bogs (toilets) and basins", or "second class citizens who are servants to surveyors". In general, there is not much difference between two buildings being managed by two different FM providers, as: the elevators operate; hand towels are supplied in the bathroom; the heating and air conditioning work properly; common areas are cleaned, and; security is present at reception, etc. FM may be viewed as a commodity, where little value can be extracted, although level of service can be the differentiating factor which turns FM into a branded service experience.

Employees at NB Entrust recognise that it adopts a radical approach in the real estate industry by treating FM as a professional business, where professional staff deliver a quality customer experience: "No one's doing it (FM) professionally in an organised manner. It almost happens by accident. Therefore, what we try to do is create a brand in Entrust that is actually recognised as contributing to the assets, rather than a grubby little service. It's a truly premiere service. Having the Entrust brand associated with a building should actually add asset value to the work of that building. That's what we try to create" (Interviewee R. Wilson, 2014). Michete Simon, (interviewed in 2014) said that "We are in the operator business, the same as a hotel operator or an airline. The service environment needs to work as well as the physical asset". Furthermore, the industry outlook for FM looks positive, as even in an economic downturn, FM is a key core service and cannot be scaled back. In 2012, the UK facilities management market, including in-house and contracted-out service, and total FM, was £106.3 billion, which is predicted to rise by £10.7 billion to £117 billion by 2017 (FMJ, 2013). The outsourced sector will reach £23.2 billion by 2018, representing a growth of 5% (Donati, 2015). This reflects companies' continuing focus on reducing costs and on acquiring specialist expertise which they would otherwise not have.

### **Holistic Brand Positioning**

By focusing on those aspects of the business which create value for customers and by carefully reappraising the NB Entrust philosophy, this study strives to build a holistic brand positioning model at the exploratory stage. NB Entrust's vision is recognised for superior customer service and innovation, resulting in better investment value for clients and more profitability for NB.

Let us begin to tell the story of how NB Entrust can achieve this vision.

### **- Culture**

An organisation's culture consists of a pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with the problems of external adaptation and internal integration. These assumptions have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore need to be taught to new members as being the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems (Schein, 1984). The senior management of NB Entrust emphasises that relationships are a central component of its culture: *"Ultimately the thing that makes a difference in FM is the way my people interact with the tenants, the landlords, each other, the service providers, and the public. This is what the culture is about. I want the culture to be recognised by the difference in the way we treat people.* (Interviewee Richard Wilson, 2014). NB Entrust's culture is made up of its people, and their attitudes are directly linked to the company's history, its relationship with NB Real Estate, and the current work environment and company values.

### **• History**

Nelson Bakewell was established in 1982 by Phillip Nelson and Simon Bakewell, and it quickly became a success. As a brand, they were known as a young innovative company that was on the ball, alert to the needs of their clients, and not too stuffy (Newman, 1997). In 2005, there was a proposed merger between Nelson Bakewell and industry giant, CB Richard Ellis, however, the latter party called off the deal after five months of talks. Although this incident occurred three years ago, a client interviewed still spoke about it as a mark on the brand: *"There was quite a bit of fallout. Quite a few key Nelson Bakewell staff left, and I guess it wasn't reported all that favourably in the property press, as the Estates Gazette and the Property Press got their column inches out of it and enjoyed writing about it. Then the decision was made not to merge, and therefore you were left with Nelson Bakewell as it was, but now slightly tarnished and slightly damaged from the whole process."* (Interviewee Martion Payre, 2014). In 2007, Nelson Bakewell was rebranded as NB Real Estate and Sackville Management Resource, which evolved to become NB Entrust. All of this contributes to the change management issues that need to be dealt with.

### **• Relationship with NB Real Estate**

The general view is that the relationship between NB Real Estate and NB Entrust has been strained. Everyone interviewed recognised this tension. The formation of NB Entrust caused the company to split into two separate businesses, and now they are gradually trying to bring it back together in a new state, all over again. As one interview respondent observed regarding the friction: *"There is a major problem between Real Estate and Entrust Surveyors, which doesn't get it, as they don't understand the service brand. Some do very strongly. But others don't quite understand why we need to do all this stuff. A lot of change needs to happen,"* (Interviewee Martion Payre, 2014).

Additionally, there seems to be uncertainty regarding how to balance a hierarchical relationship, where NB Real Estate contracts NB Entrust to provide service on their client's behalf, with the idea that both are equally valuable professionals working together. Two interviewees had differing views: *"The difference is that they have a service contract - NB Real Estate places a contract with NB Entrust for the delivery of the services, so there is a contractual relationship, as opposed to a colleague relationship."* (Interviewee Larry Hannam, 2014). *"Not losing sight that it is ultimately a contractual relationship, but we are there as business colleagues, and therefore, the only way we can ultimately deliver the best service, which is what we're trying to do, for the marketplace, is to do it together. That's absolutely what we've got to get right"* (Interviewee Richard William, 2014).

- **Working environment**

NB Entrust employs approximately 250 people, in addition to contracting a further 1000+ employees of supplier partners. About 50 people work at the NB Entrust headquarters on Regent Street, and NB Real Estate employs approximately 380 people at its headquarters on Sackville Street. The working environment within NB Entrust can be characterised by quality people, as described by one NB Entrust manager: *"We've got the work ethic just right. There's no one watching over your shoulder. It is a pleasure to come to work with like-minded people. We've got a real good balance of people within the departments. They are professionals and they are treated as such."* (Interviewee Nigel Lucker, 2014). However, there is still a feeling of discontentment, as some survey respondents have commented: *"We are still bedding in, current workloads that have been consistently too high since the new 'go live' day. Current portfolios require shortening to allow us to get clarity in all service areas to our properties. People are tired,"* (Anonymous, interviewed in 2014). *"Confidence has been knocked over poor performance and speed of dealing with paperwork issues between Entrust and their SP's. Mobilisation has also been particularly slow and uncontrollable by anyone other than in the mobilisation team - they seem to have their own agenda, only sharing information and copy correspondence when forced to do so by other parties* (Anonymous, interviewed in 2014).

- **Values**

Values should not be thought of as being the same thing as a company vision. Although the company has a distinct vision, there are no clear set of values specific to NB Entrust. Instead, it seems to borrow NB Real Estate's values for ideas and responsibilities, with no boundaries. However, these values do not clearly relate to NB Entrust's particular vision of delivering superior customer service and creating value for clients and profits for the company. According to one NB Entrust operation manager, *"I think the values are sort of hidden away. They are not out there to be seen by-everybody and I think that's a shame. We should be sharing these and reminding ourselves of them on a daily basis. No values are put up anywhere that are visible to visitors, our service partners, or indeed our staff. I don't think they're visible enough."* (Interviewee Nigel Lucer, 2014).

- **Issues and challenges**

There are serious concerns regarding a lack of a unified culture and strengthening the culture should be a priority. Although the company is still in a transition stage, now is the time to address issues, as people cannot perform well without the proper supportive atmosphere. The leadership success of both NB Real Estate and NB Entrust are very co-dependent and there needs to be more sharing of knowledge across the organisation.

- **Behaviour**

Standards of behaviour help ensure the delivery of the brand promise. There is a ten minute induction DVD that profiles various facilities managers' customer service centre staff and supplier partners, and this puts forward the aspirational brand behaviour in action for all new hires. According to the Head of HR, new hires should have certain characteristics: *"They have to be a NB Entrust person; someone that fits into our culture. An NB Entrust person is a team player, [has a] positive outlook, is customer focused, innovative, flexible, enthusiastic, and not afraid to change and fun"* (Interviewee Amanda Royce, 2014). NB Entrust is able to shape the behaviours of its employees through continuous training and attempts at recognition.

- **Continuous training**

NB Entrust has developed a specialist training team, known as the NB Entrust Faculty, which develops training modules that cross white and blue collar disciplines in all areas of facilities management, health and safety, contractor management, etc. All employees and service partners are taught the five fundamental gold standards that underpin all they do:

- **Say hello:** greet and acknowledge customers and visitors pleasantly and appropriately;
- **Say goodbye:** acknowledge customers and visitors as they are leaving the premises pleasantly and appropriately;
- **Look right:** maintain a high standard of personal presentation;
- **Everything in its place:** ensure that the presentation of your workplace is to an appropriate standard;
- **Think ahead and solve problems:** take actions on customer or visitor issues or problems, and anticipate potential issues.

- **Recognition**

The success of NB Entrust lies with the success of its people. Currently, employees do not feel the benefits of the efforts put into their job. Part of this is due to the goal of a service being invisible to the customer. However, the person delivering the service does need to feel visible

and recognised by NB Entrust. A supplier partner interviewed described this dilemma as follows: *“I think most are happy with their job. It can be frustrating for the guys. We’re at the top of the tree and are privileged to see the big picture, but when you are at the bottom and you can’t get the job done, that’s the worst thing - when they can’t get a job done for whatever reason. It’s difficult judging the engineers’ performance, because there are different reasons for them not finishing a job”* (Interviewee Michael Gibson, 2014).

In early 2008, NB Entrust started to build internal recognition schemes by nominating quality supplier partner staff as NB service representatives. These service representatives are not part of the cluster team management staff. They go through four days of extra training on delivering superior service, and then receive a certificate and special badge to signify their status.

- **Issues and challenges**

There are some slight concerns, as even though ideal training schemes are in place, it is quite difficult to guarantee that third party suppliers consistently deliver the NB Entrust branded experience. NB Entrust seems to be on the right track with regards to staff recognition, but there is still more that can be done to provide motivation and commitment. In services, the person becomes part of the offering, and hence soft skills such as social confidence, patience and kindness all grow in importance.

- **Service Offering**

In order to effectively manage a building, it is critical to define what you need to deliver, and then prove that you can deliver on your promise. As expressed by an NB Entrust operations manager: *“Our ethos and our drive is to ensure that we don’t just deliver an essential service to the value of that contract, but that we do it beyond that, by ensuring that the experience of our customer, who are known as tenants in other organisations, are serviced, and don’t actually realise that they are being looked after. It is almost a five star hotel approach in an office environment”* (Interviewee Nigel Luckker, 2014). NB Entrust aims to offer a superior customer service that provides value for money when you pay your service charge. It is able to achieve this by delivery through a dedicated supply chain network, setting standards through service level agreements, and measuring performance through key performance indicators.

- **Supply Chain Network**

NB Entrust has an infrastructure network dividing the UK into four geographic regions: 1) Scotland down to Manchester; 2) Manchester down to the outskirts of London; 3) West of London to the Southwest of the UK, and; 4) London. Each region has about 5 cluster areas, with each cluster consisting of up to 30 buildings in close proximity to each other, which together makes up the 600 managed properties. There are nine principal supplier partners assigned to each service in each region, which allows for economies of scale and management efficiencies.

Table I shows the breakdown of supplier partners and their associated region and specialisation.

Region	M and E Fabric Maintenance	Cleaning	Security	Landscaping
1	PME Carillion	Andron	Advance Security	ISS Waterers
2	Dalkia	OCS	Advance Security	ISS Waterers
3	Mitie	Mitie	Mitie	Mitie
4	Hayden	Mitie	Shield Guarding	Mitie

**Table I: Supplier Partners**

- **Service Level Agreements (SIA's)**

Every NB-managed building is assessed and assigned a defined service specification, which is based on the requirements set out in the various leases, the nature and type of building, and feedback from the customer. This is translated to SLA's, which specify the detailed level of service for each building expected from contracted service partners. The NB customer support centre (CSC) or helpdesk is set up to deal with reactive requests. The CSC currently takes about 3,500 calls and issues over 3,000 work orders per month. A dedicated management team - Asset OnCall, includes a general manager, a database administrator and helpdesk staff. A single phone number allows clients, customers, and suppliers to make requests or follow up on work 24 hours a day.

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)**

Service partners' performances are measured by 15 KPI's. Each month, five KPI's are randomly selected per service area for each supplier. In theory, all 15 KPI's should be evaluated over a three month period. The outcomes of the KPI evaluations result in a monthly report, which generates a correction action notice if supplier performance is below standard. The performance report is based on the red, amber, and green (RAG) tolerance levels, as follows:

<b>Red</b>	Achievement of 79% or less, indicating real concern and need to escalate action
<b>Amber</b>	Achievement of 80-89%, indicating some concern and need to focus on corrective action plan to improve performance
<b>Green</b>	Achievement of 90-100%, indicating no real concerns

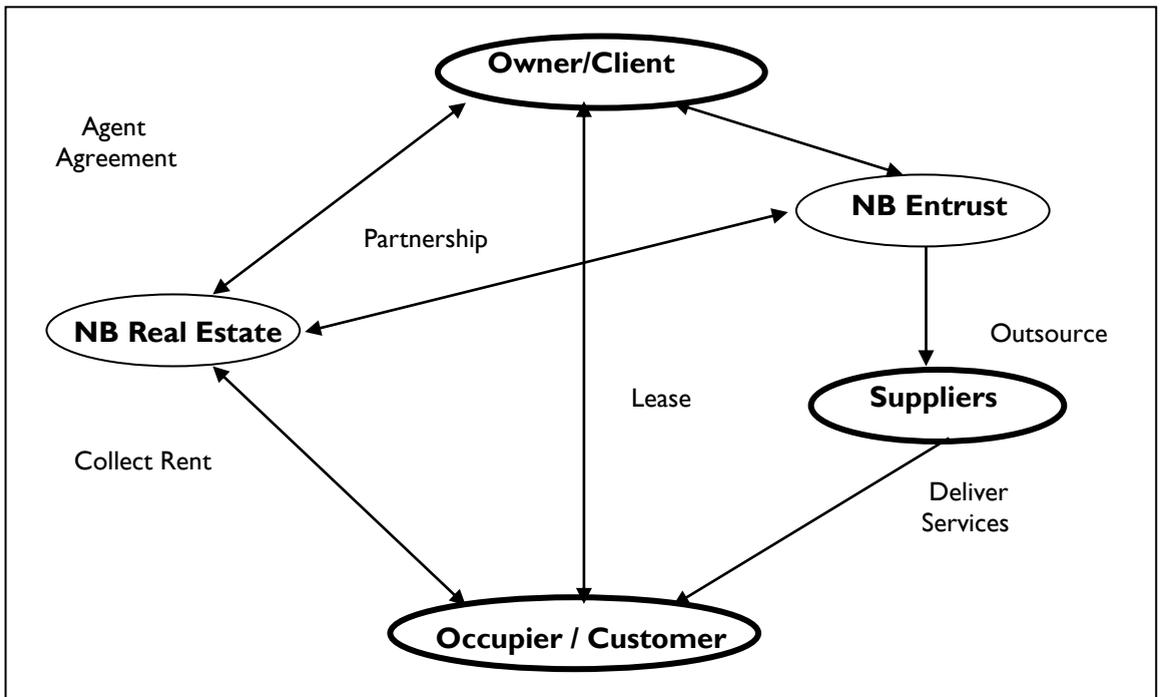
**Table 2: Performance Report of the KPIs**

• **Issues and Challenges**

The service offering is operationally sound, and is among the strongest points of the company. There are no real concerns, and in fact, NB Entrust seems to be going above and beyond the expected service offering. For example, NB Entrust currently services 20% of the building, which are common areas. They have recognised the exciting opportunity to expand their range of offering to the remaining 80% of the building, which are the tenant areas and to sell customised services directly to the occupier, without going through the landlord.

- **Markets and Customers**

The market in which NB Real Estate and NB Entrust competes in involves a relationship matrix, involving three parties. They are employed by the landlord through an agent agreement to collect rent and deliver services to tenants on their behalf. This is at the B2B level, as the landlords are all large asset management funds. At the B2C level, tenants are the end-users, who experience the service. NB Entrust also outsources to third party suppliers to deliver the service and it is considered a competitor when servicing non-NB managed buildings. Figure 1, below, summarises this.



**Figure 1: Relationship Matrix**

- **Landlords / Owners/ Clients**

Historically, landlords offered tenants a 25 year lease, and only focused on collecting the rent on time - as they saw tenants as just income on a spreadsheet. Nowadays, the average lease length is seven years, and the spotlight is now on tenant retention. Although the industry is slow to pick up on this idea, landlords are starting to take an interest and are getting involved in satisfying tenants: *“From the client’s point of view, getting that customer to renew their lease is fundamental for our business. If we can’t get that tenant to stay in the building, then the knock-on effect is significant. And if the reason we can’t do it is because we can’t be more imaginative with the service charge, then there is a clear issue for us, which is something where we really need to be speaking to the team at NB and saying, “how do we get round this”? What else can we do?”* (Interviewee Martin Payre, 2014).

- **Tenants / Occupiers / Customers**

Customers’ decision to occupy a property is usually led by, in order of importance: location; the rent being demanded, and; the quality of the building. NB Entrust’s domain is over the quality of the building on behalf of the landlord. One client talks of the brand value which may influence a purchasing decision: *“If there’s not much to pick between them, and if a tenant is kind of hovering thinking: do we do this, or not? Or if you’ve got that brand of NB Entrust quality stamped on it (the building, and if that reputation’s in their minds, it may have an influence. This is all part of what we’re trying to do - offering quality buildings”,* (Interviewee Martin Payre, 2014).

Once they are installed in the building, customers wants quality service, value for money, transparency in the service charge, and predictability in the environment. However, in satisfying these needs, there is a lack of industry understanding that there are different types of requirements for each customer. NB Entrust, on the other hand, acknowledges this, and strives to offer customised service offerings, which are tailored to each customer to increase the operational value of their space.

- **Suppliers as Partners**

Traditionally, suppliers were thought of as being merely contractors who “needed a bang over the head” to get the job done. NB Entrust’s approach is to treat suppliers as partners who are part of the one team philosophy. This is accomplished by NB Entrust’s innovative cluster team strategy, which ensures the execution of a highly-focused level of service. Each cluster has a management team consisting of: one NB facilities manager; one supplier partner manager from each of the four service areas, and; building managers associated with the portfolio.

- **Issues and Challenges**

Some concerns arise regarding the challenge that competitors will soon surface, as forecasted by a NB Entrust Board Director: *“The biggest problem is that the barriers to entry into the market aren’t*

terribly high. If we could get momentum behind it (NB Entrust], we'd have 18 months before our competitors catch up" (Interviewee Richard Willuam, 2014). Additionally, the complex nature of the industry and the unique position of NB Entrust *viz a vis* NB Real Estate prevented most interviewees from naming specific competitors, as no one company offers a similar service-based approach.

## - **Design**

A coherent style and consistency creates reconcilability and memorability, which are the primary aims of brand identity management. Design is the means of obtaining visual consistency and design management is a vital corporate discipline in achieving this. The complexities of design management often come from the need to balance consistency with flexibility, in order to address different target audiences within the overall corporate, or brand design framework, (Schmidt and Ludlow, 2002). NB Entrust is a sub-brand of NB Real Estate Group, and therefore the brand logo guidelines are the same as those of NB Real Estate. However, as a service brand is delivered by people, the uniforms worn by over 1,000 staff are an extremely visible and dominant aspect of the brand.

### • **Logo**

Since the NB Entrust logo is derived from the Real Estate logo, there is instant recognition due to connection between the two brands. The NB logo and identity is based on the idea of space - dividing space up, managing space, or using space in different ways to add value to clients' businesses. The thick black vertical bars give it a modern feel and make the logo visibly stand out. The serif font gives it a sense of tradition, which offsets the stark bars.

### • **Uniforms**

The distinctive bright green uniforms have mixed approval with a love it, or hate it opinion. At the very least, they do get noticed. But the bright green coloured uniform is not always adaptable to use for all clients such as:

- The Ark building has it's own brand identity
- Sainsburys — a rival supermarket chain called Asda has green uniforms
- Henderson Global Investors — clients prefers white shirts

Furthermore, suppliers do not always think the uniform is practical, as articulated below: "Our engineers need to wear sensible shirts and not the green. When you've been working on a dirty plant for an hour, the green shirt shows up sweat marks on your shirt" (Interviewee Micheal Gibson, 2014).

Despite criticisms, the bright green does achieve its objectives of allowing building occupiers and visitors to identify who works in the building and it also promotes a sense of one team, where all supplier partners across service specialisations wear the same standout colour.

- **Issues and Challenges**

There are no real concerns here, as design issues are largely subjective and as long as everyone is in agreement to support the logo and uniforms, identity can be maintained. NB Entrust has also accommodated the opinion of the three clients that oppose the bright green coloured uniforms.

- **Communications**

Unless values, which are essentially the same in meaning, are being communicated to both employees and consumers alike, brand image (the outside world's overall impression) may not reflect brand identity (the collective understanding within the company), which could weaken the brand (De Chernatony et al., 2006). However, there are many reasons why inconsistencies may occur between the dual messages, such as short and long term tensions, day-to-day corporate demands of budget pressures, or the desire for immediate returns from isolated initiatives.

Senior management wanted NB Entrust's operational model to be perfected before working on marketing the brand. The view was not to overwork the brand, if what the company was doing was not good enough. Instead, they decided to focus entirely on internal communications, with minimal external communications.

- **Internal Strategies**

Efforts regarding internal communications are targeted for headquarters and site-based staff, using newsletters and half-yearly road shows by the management team, respectively. However, the right message may not be getting through, as illustrated here: *"You can never over-communicate. But we probably need to listen more closely to what problems people actually have."* (Interviewee Richard Willum, 2014). *"We do have communication problems with our staff because they are so geographically dispersed and therefore not all of them are able to receive the information at around the same time as everyone else. But, we do try and update them on what is going on"* (Interviewee Amanda Royce, 2014). 'Company Shout' is a monthly online newsletter which is distributed throughout the NB Real Estate Group. A separate NB Entrust-dedicated newsletter has been created, which was distributed in March and is now also distributed in August as from this year. It consists of business updates written in a relatively light-hearted manner.

The road shows have received positive feedback and seem to be a success, because of the face-to-face interactions. These reach out to site-based staff in the various properties around the UK. A member of the senior management team explains the road shows in this manner: *"What's happening with the management team, is that they keep on being operations-focused and forget about*

the core message. Therefore we've got these road shows now to enforce it again. Something that I like to do, is when we go out every at least half-a-year, or three-quarters, and speak to all staff internally to see what's going on, where the business is going, where it's going well and where we need to improve. But in essence, we always do the same thing - that is what we're about. People won't get what we're about until they are told, and told and told again" (Interviewee Richard Willuam, 2014). There is also an IT initiative in progress where all site-based staff will have access to email, the NB Entrust internet, and also a shared network drive. The goal is to have everyone fully IT-operational by January 2015.

- **External Strategies**

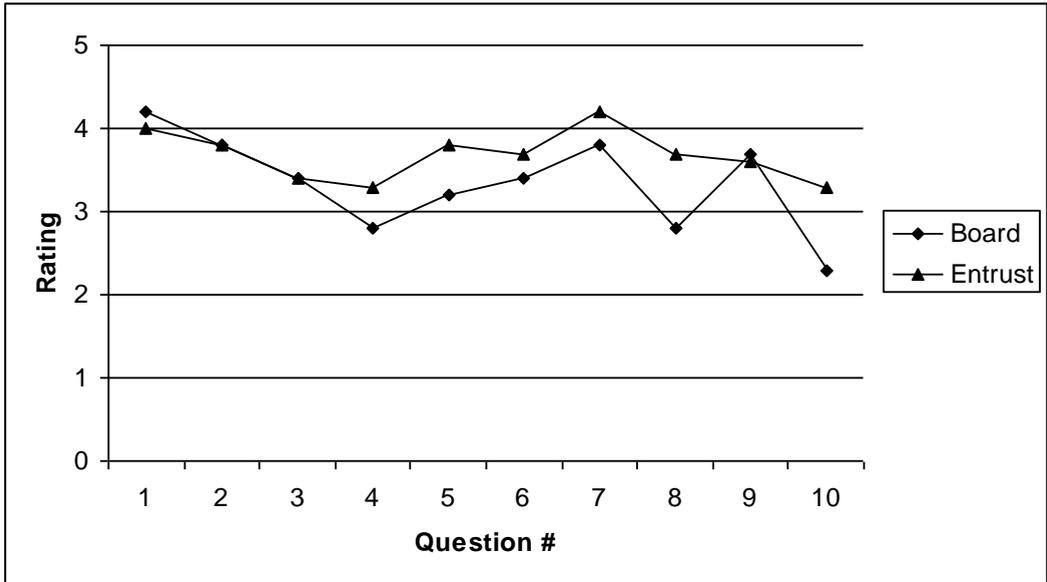
End-user customers do not choose NB Entrust as their FM provider, but rather the landlord clients do, and therefore new business pitches market directly to perspective clients. According to NB Entrust's senior management, this has proved successful: "So far, we've won everything we've gone for, and people are very interested in what we have to say. This is clear evidence that it is a marketable sale offer" (Interviewee Richard Willuam, 2014). However, NB Real Estate and NB Entrust are presented as one entity in the business proposal and also as a standalone brand, whereby NB Entrust does not have its own strategy. There are no external marketing strategies in place to reinforce NB Entrust's market leading position.

- **Issues and Challenges**

There are real concerns that both internal and external communication is lacking. Marketing NB Entrust was essentially an afterthought. However, now that the service model is marketable, the company does not have the structure in place to sell it effectively to employees, much less to potential clients on a scale larger than one client at a time. The challenge now is how to effectively communicate with all stakeholders.

### **Building a Leadership Brand Survey**

The survey had a 68% response rate, out of a sample size of 60. The results reinforced the findings from the holistic brand positioning exercise, in that there is still work to be done to build NB Entrust as a leadership brand. Figure 2 shows the average response by collector group.



**Figure 2: Survey Average Response by Collector Group**

**- Quantitative Analysis**

The grand total average was 3.6, indicating that most were between ‘unsure’ and ‘agree’ about the leadership brand statements. Surprisingly, responses from Board members were lower than those from NB Entrust employees, with total average responses of 3.3 and 3.7, respectively. The purpose of splitting into two collector groups was to discover the difference of opinions. It was expected that the Board would have a higher opinion of current leadership branding capabilities, yet it seems that they are quite critical of themselves and are aware of which areas need to be improved. This was an encouraging result, as recognition by senior management is an essential first step in building the brand. Some of the highlights are as follows:

- The statement that received the highest score of 4.1 was ‘we invest in training for supplier partners to teach our values with an emphasis on customer perspectives’. This is in line with the targeted effort invested in training third party suppliers to instil customer service values.
- ‘We know how we want to be viewed by our target customers and we have created a clear company identity based on this’ received the second highest score of 4.0. As the holistic brand positioning demonstrated, the NB Entrust vision is indeed known by all. However, statements regarding articulation of identity values (3.9) and translating that into actions (3.4) scored progressively lower.

- The penultimate statement was *'we have a process to identify development gaps in our next generation of leaders and have a long term view for career advancement'*, which scored 3.3. This may be related to the fact that most NB Entrust management staff are new to the job. The company is still in early stages for rewarding and incentivising, however, as the company reaches the next stage of growth, HR will need to improve methods of reviewing performance and will have to put development plans in place.
- As expected, *'we rigorously communicate to all stakeholders the degree to which we invest in building a leadership brand'* received the lowest score of 3.1. The primary research found that communication was the element most lacking. As one respondent succinctly commented: *"Talk about it: This is the first I have heard anyone mention to us as a brand."* This low rating may also be due to the strong language used, which was meant to emphasise that people need to shout about the brand (See Appendix A for full details of the survey results).

## **Recommendations**

The holistic brand positioning model sets forth a brand audit of NB Entrust and visualizes the factors that contribute to the customer experience. This will act as a unified set of propositions that can be strengthened in the current environment and can also be expanded into other markets. The outlines in this respect are clear, specific, and actionable recommendations, which are based on the research, which NB Entrust can implement now.

### **Leadership Actions**

- *Stop and reflect on what the NB Entrust brand means and what has been accomplished together with NB Real Estate.*

The relationship between NB Real Estate and NB Entrust needs to be fully explained. As the primary research shows, there is still much confusion within the overall culture of the firm. This is an essential first step to clarify internal relationships, as only then can employees communicate company brand values externally. As the secondary research reveals, it is necessary to provide motivation and to paint the picture of how each individual contributes to the overall strategy of the company. Similar to the 'Into NB Real Estate' booklet, which was produced during the transition from Nelson Bakewell to NB Real Estate, there is a need to produce a booklet defining exactly what the NB Entrust brand stands for and what has been accomplished together with NB Real Estate.

- *Appoint designated person on the Board of Directors to be in charge of executing NB Entrust brand strategy.*

Currently, there is no dedicated marketing director, neither any one person who is held accountable for creating the NB Entrust brand strategy, much less for executing it. There needs to be acknowledgment from senior management that the success of the NB Entrust brand is high on the agenda. The person on the Board who is in charge of executing the NB Entrust brand strategy should have marketing expertise, as well as a keen understanding of the business.

### **Service Led Behaviours**

- *Build character within employees.*

Rocco Forte, when asked the secret of providing great service in hotels, replied: “*Hire nice people*” (Reeves, 2008). For a service sector brand, the emphasis is on people skills. NB Entrust needs to instil the ethos that *‘we are all responsible for the wellbeing of the property’*. This can be done by hiring the right kind of people, and also by incorporating a process to develop character within training programmes. Character is a set of learned behaviour traits and the three key ingredients of good character are: a sense of self direction; an acceptance of personal responsibility, and; the effective regulation of one’s own emotions (Reeves, 2008). A lesson learned from the brand visioning process is that once employees know the behaviour expected of them, NB needs to provide the support and tools for them to do their job effectively. For supplier partners, this implies defining the service goals, training them on how to offer quality service, and driving them to deliver it.

- *Evaluate if current nine supplier partners can offer the premier service NB Entrust requires.*

As a component of the research on brand strategy, a company must decide whether to compete on price, or quality, and may be hard-pressed to offer cost savings, along with high levels of service. It is important that supplier partners are a good fit with NB Entrust’s vision and they have to have the ability to carry out that vision. Some of the larger supplier partners that offer economies of scale, based on their significant UK presence, may not be suited to fulfil the unusual requests that may be made by an occupier expecting superior customer service.

### **Communication**

- *Target internally the right message for the right people.*

NB Entrust’s headquarters staff are different to site-based facilities managers, who are in turn different to supplier partner staff. All are certainly different from NB Real Estate staff. Communication needs to be targeted at the appropriate audience, based on their needs, and geared towards what motivates each group, rather than a one-size-fits all approach.

- *Build relationships with customers through a community portal for occupiers.*

The NB Hub is an online information system which allows for more interactive functionality between the managing agent and the client. Currently, only AXA and Sainsburys have access to this system, and they are able to look at lease agreements, find details regarding outstanding rent balances, as well as other search and reporting tools. There is a need to put the same efforts into better communication with clients to ensure better communication with end-users, by building a community website for occupiers.

### **Brand Building**

- *Develop NB Entrust as a potential standalone brand.*

Although the value proposition of both NB Real Estate and NB Entrust combined is stronger, NB Entrust has the potential to be a standalone brand. If this status is achieved, then NB Entrust will increase its own value and will compliment NB Real Estate even more. As the company is one-and-a-half years old, and is getting over growing pains, now is an opportunity to issue customer satisfaction surveys.

- *Position NB Entrust as a Thought Leader in the FM World.*

There is a need to participate in industry conferences and think-tank events organised by commercial and government organisations, and also to encourage staff to attend networking events. People need to start talking about how their company is contributing to the knowledge of best practices within the industry and is a champion for the NB Entrust brand. NB Entrust should actively seek external recognition and apply for industry awards for various elements of FM. These are inexpensive ways of creating momentum and excitement within the company, as well as advocating NB Entrust's position as a pioneer in the industry.

### **Global opportunities**

- *Expand business into Europe*

Once NB Entrust has strengthened its brand at home, it can expand into global markets, preferably with NB Real Estate as the managing agent, but also maybe without. It should look at locations where large fund management clients already own property, and target these areas. There is huge potential for expansion, exploiting the already-established reputation within the current client base. Clients seem to be looking more and more for a single solution for Europe. This objective is in line with the economies of scale that NB Entrust already offers in the UK.

The Portfolio Manager at Henderson Global Investors said that: *"I guess the exciting part for NB going forward would be 25% of what we manage at the moment. Well, if we double what we're managing, there's an opportunity for them to double what they manage for us"*, and also, *"I guess that's*

the relationship, and with regards to the ratio - we feel 25% is about right. We'd spread it around as we do, but I think that's an opportunity. We've been expanding quite heavily in Europe and NB doesn't do Europe as far as I'm aware. So we haven't been able to offer them loads of expansion opportunities, for that's really been where we've been growing" (Interviewee Martin Payre, 2014). With regards to issues concerning outsourced suppliers, new contracts will need to be set up with either new suppliers or current supplier partners that already operate in Europe. This is no doubt a large task, but it is one that could be prove successful, once the infrastructure is in place.

### **Limitations of this Study**

The case study aims to examine a specific B2B service company to put the research learning into practice first hand. A framework was developed on how a company can create a branded experience to differentiate its service offering, and each dimension of the framework was applied to the case study firm and evaluated accordingly. It is not the intent to use the outcomes of the case study company as a generalisation for all B2B service businesses, as each company will have their own unique culture, behaviours, service offering, etc. to be assessed using the holistic brand positioning approach. The main limitation was that of the constraints of the time available and the fact that the number of interviews was limited. Although key people from each stakeholder group were interviewed, a larger sample would have been more desirable. Additionally, the online survey would have been more representative if non-headquarter employees of NB Entrust were also included, such as on-site building managers and supplier partners. However, the lack of IT infrastructure and email access prevented contact with a wider range with these groups.

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**Appendix A: Survey Results**

What is the NB Entrust’s leadership brand capability? Rate NB Entrust on the following statements.

1. We know how we want to be viewed by our target customers and we have created a clear company identity based on this.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	3	50.0%	2	33.3%	4.2
Entrust	0	0.0%	1	2.9%	7	20.0%	17	48.6%	10	28.6%	4.0
Total	0	0.0%	1	2.4%	8	19.5%	20	48.8%	12	29.3%	4.0

2. We have articulated a clear statement of how we want our leadership brand to be viewed that is connected to our firm’s identity.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	1	16.7%	2	33.3%	2	33.3%	3.8
Entrust	0	0.0%	2	5.7%	7	20.0%	20	57.1%	6	17.1%	3.9
Total	0	0.0%	3	7.3%	8	19.5%	22	53.7%	8	19.5%	3.9

3. We have translated our statement of a leadership brand into a set of desired leadership actions.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	2	33.3%	3	50.0%	0	0.0%	3.3
Entrust	0	0.0%	8	22.9%	8	22.9%	16	45.7%	3	8.6%	3.4
Total	0	0.0%	9	22.0%	10	24.4%	19	46.3%	3	7.3%	3.4

4. We have a process to identify development gaps in our next generation of leaders and, have a long term view for career advancement.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	5	83.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2.8
Entrust	0	0.0%	7	20.0%	13	37.1%	11	31.4%	4	11.4%	3.3
Total	0	0.0%	8	19.5%	18	43.9%	11	26.8%	4	9.8%	3.6

5. Our individual leadership development plans include acquiring skills, knowledge and perspectives that matter to our target customers.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	1	16.7%	3	50.0%	0	0.0%	3.2
Entrust	0	0.0%	1	2.9%	8	19.5%	20	57.1%	6	17.1%	3.9
Total	0	0.0%	3	7.34%	9	22.0%	23	56.1%	6	14.4%	3.8

6. Our individual leadership development plans include acquiring skills, knowledge' and perspectives that matter to our supplier partners.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	3	50.0%	2	33.3%	0	0.0%	3.2
Entrust	0	0.0%	4	11.4%	7	20.0%	19	54.3%	5	14.3%	37
Total	0	0.0%	5	12.2%	10	24.4%	21	51.2%	5	12.2%	3.6

7. We invest in training for supplier partners to teach our values with an emphasis on customer perspectives.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	3	50.0%	1	16.7%	3.8
Entrust	0	0.0%	2	5.7%	2	5.7%	20	57.1%	11	31.4%	4.1
Total	0	0.0%	2	4.9%	4	9.8%	23	56.1%	12	29.3%	4.1

8. We encourage our employees to invest in life experiences that help them build relevant customer knowledge and skills.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	3	50.0%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	2.8
Entrust	0	0.0%	6	17.1%	6	17.1%	20	57.1%	3	8.6%	3.6
Total	0	0.0%	8	19.5%	9	22.0%	21	51.2%	3	7.3%	3.5

9. We gauge the effectiveness of leadership brand investments by our business results.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	0	0.0%	3	50.0%	1	16.7%	3.5
Entrust	0	0.0%	3	8.6%	16	37.1%	15	42.9%	4	11.4%	3.6
Total	0	0.0%	5	12.2%	13	31.7%	18	43.9%	5	12.2%	3.6

10. We rigorously communicate to all stakeholders the degree to which we invest in building a leadership brand.

Group	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree		Average rating (1-5)
	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	# of resp	% to total	
Board	1	16.7%	3	50.0%	1	16.7%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	2.3
Entrust	0	0.0%	8	22.9%	14	40.0%	10	28.6%	3	8.6%	3.2
Total	1	2.4%	11	26.8%	15	36.6%	11	26.8%	3	7.3%	3.1

### List of Interview Participants

Interviewee	Position and Status	Company	Date of Interview	Method
Juliet Bray	Marketing Director	NB Real Estate	January 24, 2014	Face to Face
Richard Willuam	Managing Director	NB Real Estate	January 21 & 24, 2014	E-mail Face to face
Michele Simon	Director of Operations	NB Entrust	January 24, 2014	Telephone Face to face
Liana Sinclair	General Manager	Asset OnCall	January 21 & February 04, 2014	E-mail Face to face
Nigel Lucker	Regional Operations Manager	NB Entrust	February 07, 2014	Face to face
Larry Hannam	Director	Burcote Consultants	January 27, 2014	Face to face
Matthew Punshon	Board Director	NB Entrust	January 21 & February 07, 2014	E-mail Face to face
Amanda Royce	Head of HR	NB Entrust	February 07, 2014	Face to face
Michael Gibson	Customer Service Manager	Haden Building Management	February 10, 2014	Telephone Face to face
Richard Wilson	Managing Director	NB Entrust	February 17, 2014	Face to face
Jonathan Lovejoy	Director of Operations	NB Real Estate	February 17, 2014	Face to face
Jill Jackson	Director of HR	Avanta Managed Offices	February 07 & 12, 2014	E-mail Face to face
Martin Payne	Portfolio Manager	Henderson Global Investors	February 20, 2014	Face to face
Danny Lemon	Prestige Manager	NB Entrust	February 12, 2014	E-mail Telephone