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Exclusive TalentQuest White Paper: ["Talent Management in the Financial Services Industry: Best Practices for Making the Most of a Sluggish Economy"](#)



TalentQuest News

➤ **July 14:** [New TalentQuest White Paper Details Key Personality Traits, Competencies of Effective Performers.](#) Greater talent pool provides unique opportunity for financial institutions to develop "all-star" teams during sluggish economy.

In Theory: Can Leadership Make a Brand Stick?



by Rick Brandt, Ph.D.

[Last month's newsletter](#) featured six principles of successful ideas, as outlined by [Dan Heath](#), author of the book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, who presented in the June session of [The 2008 Leadership Forum at Georgia Tech](#). This month, we continue our look at "sticky ideas" by answering the question: **Can Leadership Make a Brand Stick?**

The iPhone has completely redefined what a mobile phone can do. Today you can call a customer to tell them that you're in the area and would like to drop by, map directions to their office, obtain real-time news and stock performance, then relax a bit as you listen to one of your 1000 favorite songs. Your cell phone just completed in moments what used to take at least four devices to accomplish, and it did so in a truly distinctive and memorable way.

Apple has clearly incorporated several of Dan Heath's Six into its brand development. Many of the company's ideas break long-held schemas: we don't expect phones to be missing key pads and we certainly don't expect the screen to re-orient itself when we turn it sideways. Apple taps into our *emotions* through clever pairing of upbeat music and its products — you probably don't know the song "1234" by Feist, but you would quickly recognize it (Google

➤ **July 16:** [TalentQuest Webinar Discusses How Companies Transform Their Internal Cultures to Benefit Customers and Employees.](#) July 24 event with Duane Reade will teach HR professionals how to develop cultural skills, knowledge, behaviors and abilities needed for people in key roles to succeed.

Calendar of Events

➤ **TODAY! July 24**
1:00-2:00PM EST

[Webcast: "Using Talent Management to Transform Your Organizational Culture"](#)

TalentQuest consultant Adrienne McVeigh, Ph.D., and Robin Costa, Director of Human Resources for Duane Reade, a 50-year-old retailer that began as a single-location operation and today operates more than 250 stores, will share their collective knowledge and experiences using talent management to lead and support the transformation of an organizational culture.

[Click to register for this free event!](#)

it!). Apple builds on mass *credibility* in the observation that every fourth person walking down the street is wearing a set of white earphones.

What does brand-building have to do with leadership? Well, some of the world's most recognized and respected organizations such as Coca-Cola, Morgan Stanley, and Lowe's have built long-term sustainable value because in part, they have built distinct and memorable leadership brands. In other words, they have asked and answered the following questions:

- What makes leadership effective in our organization?
- How can we build more effective leaders and increase our bench strength?

These are critical steps to building a leadership brand that sticks. Just as successful brands are distinctive and identifiable, so are leadership brands. Consider the Southern Company: As one of the largest utility providers in North America, it has developed a leadership brand it calls "Southern Style," which identifies what it takes for leaders to be successful in the company: they must operate with *unquestionable trust*; they must demonstrate *superior performance*; they must *commit totally*; and they must act with unmistakable *ethics*.

"Southern Style" is sticky as a brand because it embodies principles that lead ideas to last. Principles that are simple but not simplistic, concrete in language and description, and emotional and aspirational in tone. Principles that are supported by stories that other leaders can tell to help it come alive. It also achieves credibility because it is clearly aligned with the company's strategy: "to provide regular, predictable, and sustainable earnings (and performance) over the long term."

Why is "Southern Style" important? It provides a framework for Southern Company's leaders to make decisions with regard to treating customers and employees. As a result, the company has tripled the performance of the S&P 500 Index over the past 10

years and has outperformed the market during the past four recessions.

What is your organization's leadership brand? Invest the time and resources required to build a strong leadership brand, and you will surely find it to be one of the most significant investments you will make towards securing your organization's financial future.

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