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Protected: “Just Do it” or “Can You Hear Me Now”: Whither the Tagline?

BY LISA B. MAY 22, 2014 EDIT



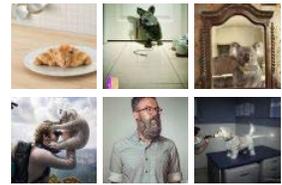
It used to be unthinkable for a business that wanted to cultivate a **strong brand** to not have a **strong tagline**. But consider **Nordstrom**, **Starbucks**, **Lululemon** and **Whole Foods**: profitable blue-chips with rabid fans, insanely high repeat business, strong and consistent visual identities, brands that are so well-formed, they almost feel like friends... and no taglines.

Advertisers and their agencies are feeling less and less married to the idea that a good brand needs a tagline. A lot of it is (surprise) the Internet. Because the Internet has conditioned us all to want faster, faster, the consensus is that consumers won't even find time to read a tagline (how lazy is that?), and so some advertisers just don't bother including one. Other advertisers are looking at online/interactive to propel their ads and ideas to notoriety; these formats just aren't as tagline-friendly as conventional print or broadcast is. Also, as more and more advertising goes mobile, advertisers don't want to waste valuable, small-screen real estate. And for other advertisers, the flexibility of a hashtag is more appealing than a codified, carved-in-stone tagline.

There are philosophical reasons why some companies have gone soft on taglines. For example, the most famous tagline of all — **Nike's Just Do It** — is slowly phasing out, and that's deliberate, to reflect the company's evolution. In 2012, Stefan Olander, Nike's VP of digital sport, spoke about the company's progression from simply a maker of shoes to a purveyor of lifestyle and technology:

“Nike is...a company that isn't just focused on products, but is focused on products and services. It used to be that when you bought a product, that was the end of the relationship...Now, the purchase of any Nike product needs to be the beginning of the relationship we have with the consumer. The change, though, is that people now demand us not to say 'Just do it,' they say 'Help me just do it.' 'Enable me to just do it.' And the role of the brand changes from one of inspiration to one of

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inspiration and enablement.”

Other industry insiders think that in today’s business climate, brands should stop making demands of customers. Instead of telling customers, “Think Different,” “Just Do It” or “Don’t Leave Home Without It,” advertisers need to respect the current balance of power that favors the consumer.

Still, taglines probably aren’t going away anytime soon. Some experts believe that even if they’re wasted on consumers, taglines can serve as a powerful internal rallying cry for a brand or company, reminding its employees and internal constituents of the company’s mission and values. Our own certainly falls into this category. But what do you think? Feel free to grace the comments with your thoughts, or simply leave some of your favorite taglines.



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