

eastern cape institute of **architects**

ECIA Newsletter: March 2013

I was watching with interest how the Easter Weekend rain washed away the "Splash Festival" (again). This muddy no-show came after weeks of consternation about the budget and wringing of hands about the "Splash" brand and how to best position the Nelson Mandela Bay "brand" in the eyes of tourists and locals. But, if one can look through the hype and sales talk of events Companies and PR types, there is of course the real and ongoing dilemma of how cities and regions compete for the attentions of the fickle masses of tourists and business people.

The message of how great/clean/fun/crime free/inexpensive your particular town or city is, is very difficult to get across and be heard above the noise of paid commercial advertising from Reebok, Coke or Castle Lager.

By comparison, actually, Architects have a much stronger "brand" than most, cities regions and even many countries. (I would guess that more people in the world know what an Architect is, compared to the amount of people who know where Cape Town is)

The word "Architect" (and its translation into every spoken language) has a real and specific meaning all over the world. If you say you are an Architect, there is a degree of trust that you know something about buildings and about their design. This has been the case for hundreds of years. We are custodians of a very strong brand that is likely to stay strong for hundreds more years if we look after it. But what can you and I do? I am sure we can think of a hundred ways to defend and strengthen our brand (and I for one, would like to here from readers of this mail regarding those ideas).

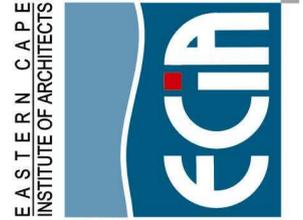
But, if we think about Coca-Cola for a second. Such a simple product, but one which keeps a promise, one which maintains the trust of the consumer. When you open a can of Coke (no matter where you bought it, no matter how much you paid) you know that you are going to taste Coke. Not milk, not horse urine, not watered down Coke without fizz, but Coke. The real thing. We all trust the Coke brand and that's why we buy it. The Coca-Cola company does not let any other drink call themselves Coke. It does not even allow them to come close to using their colours or their particular font or shape.

Architects; I suggest that this is the attitude that we must have toward our brand. If an Architect claims to be selling the services of an Architect, that is what they must deliver. Not milk, not horse urine, no watered down Coke with no fizz. To allow inferior service, not worthy of the brand "Architect", will diminish and eventually destroy this fantastic gift that we have been given. Who must police this service? I argue to you today, that it is us as Architects that must do this work, as fearless volunteers, not government, no not SACAP or other regulated bodies. We must do it.

With our brand intact we will survive the fashions of procurement and tendering that will come and go as the economy and the public mood breathes in and out.

So what can we do?Many, many things. Let us begin by sharing with each other the good ideas that we have for strengthening our brand. As some clever Chinese chap, (whose

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name I have just forgotten and whom I am probably misquoting) is once rumored to perhaps have said.

"Every one action taken is worth a thousand good intentions"

Yours in pursuit of Architectural Excellence,

Tim Hewitt-Coleman - Architect.