

Brand Name Quality

Richard Moore is a name that is synonymous with experience, quality, and top-notch brand building. It's a name that has been used by dozens of well-known brands like IBM, AT&T, CitiCorp, Vietinbank, VIBbank, dong A Banh, PNJ, Laska, VTV6, Vinamilk, Vinasoy, Protect, and many others. His clients have given him the title of 'branding wizard' for his ability to turn imagination into reality. VFR talked with this 'wizard' at the introduction of his new book named "Investment for Brand Image."



VFR: Why did you choose to pursue business in Vietnam?

Mr Moore: It seems more like Vietnam chose me. In 1993, a few years after selling my interest in a successful marketing communication firm that I cofounded in New York and then reestablishing Richard Moore Associates in order to pursue marketing communication projects on my own, I was invited by IBM, an old client of mine, to organize a two-day seminar about the relationship of design and marketing in Hong Kong for their Asia-Pacific managers. After that I came to Vietnam as a traveler for a month, and I spent the first day in Hanoi wandering the streets of the Old Quarter. Somehow, that was it for me. I continued along the coast to HCM City and returned again in 1994 with a traveling program of seminars, design workshops, and an international design exhibition that the VCCI in Hanoi and Danang and the FTDC in HCMC helped organize. I've been spending half my time in Vietnam ever since, moving between Hanoi and New York every two months. In 2005, we became the first 100 percent foreign owned company specializing in brand identity to be licensed in Vietnam.

VFR: Your work often allows you to approach the top management of Vietnamese firms. What are your opinions about them?

Mr Moore: I admire most of them. Since Doi Moi they have managed, with very little of the training and resources of their counterparts in other parts of the world, to build successful businesses that serve most of the needs of the people. Among their strengths are intelligence, skillful ability to overcome obstacles, and a strong drive to succeed. In my own relationship with them, I sometimes find one of their strengths to be a weakness. They are accustomed to overcoming the lack of knowledge of many of those that they work with by learning what they can on their own and pushing forward. In matters of design this often doesn't work so well. We are usually able to solve this problem with our willingness to provide a lot of education along with our advice.

VFR: In your point of view, how well do Vietnamese firms go about building a strong brand image and brand identity?

Mr Moore: Over the past 15 years that I have been working here, and especially over the past 4-5 years, I've watched Vietnamese firms become much more aware of the importance of branding, but relatively few of them understand the method of developing their brand image well or the role that brand identity plays in that process. My new book Investing in a Strategic Brand Image is an effort to help Vietnamese firms understand brand image and brand identity more fully.

VFR: In order to be successful, what advice could you give to Vietnamese firms?

Mr Moore: Of course, there are many skills necessary for success, but one of the most important fundamentals of branding success is differentiation. That often means deciding upon what you are best at, focusing your brand on it, and either sacrificing what does not fit well with your focus or pursuing

it under a different brand identity. It also means dividing your market into segments that you can have the most appeal to and sacrificing those that you can't. Strategic sacrifice is one of the most important concepts to grasp in achieving long-term success, but many firms pursue a business path that is profitable in the short term to the detriment of long-term opportunity.

VFR: Richard Moore Associates specializes in brand identity work. How do you differentiate yourself with other competitors in the same field?

Mr Moore: I think what differentiates us the most are two factors. One is experience. I've been helping companies develop strong brands for 40 years now. The other factor is what has grown out of that experience – a process of helping companies build brand identities that begins with developing a strategic brand differentiation strategy and then based on it, crafting unique visual and verbal identity elements and media systems.

VFR: They say that you are the "Wizard of Branding". Do you agree with that?

Mr Moore: I'm sure not a wizard. I began my career as a designer, and I guess that I've been blessed with some aesthetic talent. But I think that it is curiosity and the more rational ability to think in terms of aesthetic problems from a business point of view that enables me and the team that I work with to provide a service of value. I was born in the US, where branding originated, but as a young man I lived in Japan for six years, where a strong sense of design seems to be part of everything. Also, my ancestors come from Ireland, where the national character is a bit wild, and Germany, where it is somewhat methodical. That seems to be my character also.

VFR: Thank you very much! ■

BANK ON US

Knowledge of the market is critical for any financial institution. Especially here in Vietnam. Cimigo is a research company with constantly updated knowledge in an ever-changing landscape. Or we can make a programme especially for you. Contact Cimigo money.matters@cimigo.com and www.cimigo.com

Cimigo 