

# CORPORATE BRAND MANAGEMENT AND REPUTATION

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## MASTER CASES

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### **UNDERMINING MY AUTHORITY - BECOMING A BRAND MANAGER**

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## **Corporate Brand Management and Reputation: Master's Cases**

The "Corporate Brand Management and Reputation: Master's cases" is a case series for applying the case method of teaching and learning in higher education. The cases are relevant to brand strategists in private and public sector organizations, as well as academics and students at universities, business schools, and executive education.

The cases are written by groups of master's students as a course project. The specially developed case format is defined as: *"A management decision case describes a real business situation leading up to a question(s) that requires assessment, analysis, and a decision reached by discussion in class. The alternative approaches and recommendations from the class discussion are followed by a description of the choices made by the case company. This description is then discussed by the class."*

The student groups select the topics of their case providing updated and relevant insights into the corporate brand management. The cases can be used as "written cases" (handed out and read in advance, later to be discussed in class) and/or as "live case" (presented by the teacher following a discussion in class). Each case includes teaching notes, visuals with speaker's notes, learning objectives, board plans, and references.

The mission of the series is *"to develop cases for discussion providing insights into the theory and practice of corporate brand management and reputation, with the intent of bridging the gap between academic teaching and managerial practice."*

The series is a result of co-creation between students and teachers at the elective course Corporate Brand Management (BUSN35 – five-credit course/eight-week half-time studies), part of the master's program International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund School of Economics and Management, Sweden. The cases represent the result of the intellectual work of students under the supervision of the head of course.

Although based on real events and despite references to actual companies, the cases are solely intended to be a basis for class discussion, not as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective management. The cases are free to be used and are to be cited following international conventions.

### **Editor**

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# **Undermining My Authority - Becoming a Brand Manager**

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## **WRITTEN CASE**

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## Undermining My Authority - Becoming a Brand Manager

Alex Thompson worked for NovaTech Electronics, a leading consumer electronics manufacturer based in California. As the newly appointed Brand Manager, Alex was responsible for overseeing the brand's image, reputation, marketing campaigns, and product launches for NovaTech's range of smart home devices. These devices, known for their quality, innovation and user-friendliness, required a dynamic marketing strategy to compete in a highly saturated market.

Upon taking this position, Alex found himself in the midst of a team accustomed to traditional marketing approaches. The team was experienced within newspaper, print ads and television marketing campaigns. These methods had all previously led to NovaTech's competitive position in the market.

From the outset, Alex faced resistance. Previously working in a different department within NovaTech, Alex was perceived as an outsider by his new marketing team. Despite his experience within the company and his fresh ideas, the label of "greenie" stuck, making it difficult for Alex to gain the team's full support and respect.

Moreover, the handover was less than smooth. The former Brand Manager's information and guidance to Alex were brief and lacked depth, leaving him without critical insights into ongoing projects. Additionally, with the team lacking knowledge in some of the newer digital marketing strategies, tools and techniques, Alex felt like they were constantly playing catch-up to competing companies in the current market.

Adding to the challenge, Alex was significantly younger than most of his team members. This aspect only amplified the difficulty in establishing authority and respect. Also, the board of directors had reached out to Alex, very clearly expressing that they expected increased growth in the upcoming fiscal years. Competition was tough, and the board of directors wanted Alex to contribute to securing NovaTech's position as a leader within the market for smart home devices.

## **The Team Dynamics**

Alex's marketing team consisted of ten seasoned professionals, two interns, and a new hire. The majority of the professionals had been at the company for more than six years. When Alex took over the team, three people had recently switched jobs, leading to an overwhelming workload and an overall stressed atmosphere. Despite the strain on the team, Alex made an effort to build relationships with each team member, understanding their roles, challenges, and expectations through one-on-one meetings.

### *The Main Challenge: Robert Smith*

Among the team was Robert Smith, a veteran at the company who had also applied for the Brand Manager position. Feeling overlooked and believing himself more qualified and suited for the role, Robert made no secret of his disliking of Alex's leadership. Publicly challenging Alex's decisions and refusing to adapt to new strategies, Robert's behavior began to affect the team's morale and productivity.

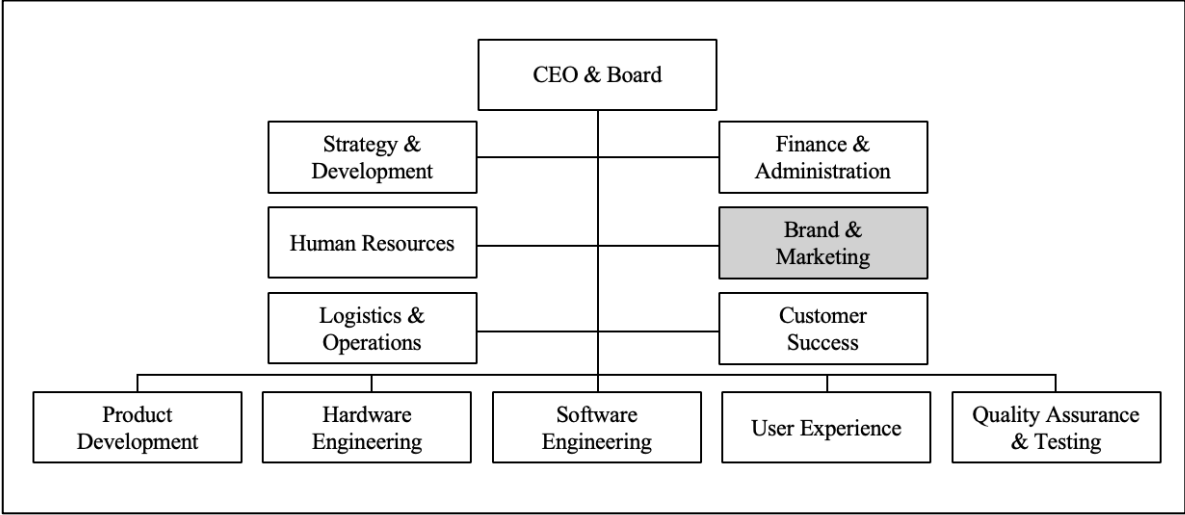
Robert's approach to marketing was traditional and rigid. He resisted the digital transformation Alex had started pushing for, believing in the "tried and true" methods that had served the brand in the past. His reluctance to analyze, improve or measure campaign results was at odds with the data-oriented approach Alex advocated for.

As Robert's behavior persisted, it began to influence other team members, creating divisions within the team. Two of the team members also started to take a negative attitude towards Alex. At this point, the atmosphere within the team was filled with negative tension.

The situation escalated during a team meeting, where a heated exchange between Alex and Robert left the team divided and at unease. On top of this, due to the complete shift of focus in the meeting, Alex felt that the brand's upcoming campaign was at risk.

***How would you react in Alex's position?***

**Exhibit 1** Organizational Structure



**Exhibit 2** Structure of Brand & Marketing

