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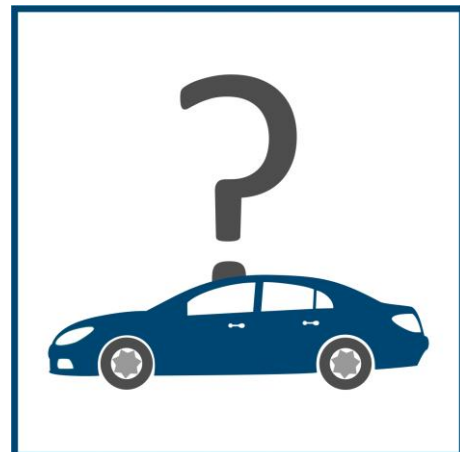
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Status Thinking Updated

A few years ago, I accompanied my husband and brother-in-law to the shop of a drugstore chain in the city center of Bremen. The two men wanted to buy a birthday present for their mother – a lipstick of her favorite brand. The shop assistant mentioned twice that the product was expensive. The only reason for this strange behavior was probably our rainy weather weekend look – jeans and raincoat. From looking at our clothes she assumed that we could not afford the lipstick. If you are treated in this way as a customer, you are more than willing to look for an alternative. We entered another drugstore right across the street. The friendly shop assistant had no problem picking out the lipstick, packing it nicely and accepting the credit card.



We don't have to be sales professionals to realize that you do not deal with customers this way. People in jeans and rain jackets might also have well-paid jobs and corresponding purchasing power. The saleswoman lost business because of her behavior. We have never bought anything in that shop ever since.

The old German saying "Like you come gone – you will also conceive" is worn out. Since the movie "Pretty Woman" we know that people who do not look rich might still have a golden card. In Germany ragged (designer) jeans and hoodies are a kind of uniform worn by many successful start-up entrepreneurs.

So, what about looking on the other side of the coin? Let us suppose we were looking for a consultant. Will we judge the quality of her or his work by looking at her or his car? Do we think that a company whose representatives do not drive large vehicles of upscale brands cannot be successful?

This was the subject of a discussion at a party we joined a few weeks ago. One of the guests stated that consultants who do not enter a potential customer's parking lot in a Mercedes or BMW are not taken seriously. According to his experience, clients see a direct relationship between vehicle size (and price) and company success. Of course, there are other status symbols – large office in an expensive location, expensive clothes, accessories, and so on. I will stick to the example of "cars."

Hardly anyone has complete control over the opinions that form in the brain at an initial impression. That is perfectly fine, but it might be wise to question these thoughts afterwards. After all, we do not know the reasons that make other people drive a smaller vehicle or why he does not wear gold cufflinks.

If we stick to the example of the large car and give it a short strategic analysis, here are some ideas:

1. The basic "mobility" performance is the same for all cars – no matter how large they are. After that, it only depends on the room that has to be transported. If you regularly have a lot of luggage, you need more space. Those who only transport themselves would get by with less.
2. The larger the car, the higher the acquisition costs and consumption. Fossil fuel is not an endless resource. From an economical point of view, it is therefore wiser to choose a vehicle that saves gas - and cost. This will reduce the carbon footprint.
3. The larger the vehicle, the more space it needs. This is a problem in our cities, especially when it comes to parking. A smaller vehicle saves space – which is becoming increasingly scarce. Most of our vehicles spend most of their time anyway rather as "stand-up vehicles" in garages and in parking lots.

So, considering strategic challenges in today's world such as sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and waste of resources, it does not seem to make sense to drive a large car if you do not need the transport capacity. For this reason, companies that make sustainability a part of their business model are saying goodbye to status thinking – at least as long as the status means to buy objects just for the status.

More and more entrepreneurs – just like us – prefer other values. Instead of spending money on status symbols, they use it for promising projects. They invest time, competence, and money to make a difference. In addition to the prominent examples, more and more smaller companies are joining this group.

Wouldn't it be better and much more modern to judge the success of companies and businesses by how they make the world better?

I think that those who judge consultants (and all other people) by material factors may miss out on valuable encounters and experiences.

Editorial Notes

About the Author

Wiebke Brüssel is a graduate in business administration and managing partner of Strategiebüro (The Strategy Office) in Germany.

We moderate planning processes - including preparation and documentation. From a single question to strategic corporate planning. Our clients are companies and organizations in the

private, social, and public sectors, companies at the beginning of their development, and founders.

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