

XEROX: BRAND THAT BECAME A COMMON NAME

Тимофеева К.В.
Руководитель *Филимонов А.Е.*

Тимофеева Кристина Владимировна – студентка (бакалавр), Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова, факультет государственного управления, Москва, Россия.

E-mail: kristya_tima@mail.ru

Annotation. The concept of “brand” is being increasingly developed with further technological and industrial advance. Some brands appear and leave the market in a short period of time, some are around decades. Moreover there are brand names that can also shape people perception of some products. Sometimes they become a common name for all substitute goods.

Key words: Xerox, company, success story, brand name, common name, intangible assets.



Picture 1. Photocopier machine

In Russia we most often refer to photocopiers as Xerox (Russian equivalent is «kseroks»). However, Xerox is not the only manufacturer of such machines. Then why the very company name became the common one for all the copiers in Russia for decades?

To answer can be tracked from the company’s history. In 1938 Chester Carlson, a single-handed physicist, invented a process for printing images using an electrically charged photoconductor-coated metal plate and dry powder (“toner”).

Joseph C. Wilson, credited as the “founder of Xerox”, took over Haloid from his father. He saw the promise in Carlson’s invention and, in 1946, signed an agreement to make it a commercial product. Wilson remained as President/CEO of Xerox until 1967 and served as Chairman until his death in 1971.

C. Carlson introduced the term ‘electrography’ for his invention, but Haloid felt that word electrophotography was very difficult to use. Looking for a term to differentiate its new system, Haloid coined the term Xerography from two Greek roots meaning “dry writing”. Haloid subsequently changed its name to Haloid Xerox in 1958 and then Xerox Corporation in 1961. You can see changes of the company name in the picture below:

XEROX: BRAND THAT BECAME A COMMON NAME



Picture 2. Changes of company name

In 1949, Xerox Corporation introduced the first xerographic copier called the Model A. Xerox became so successful that, in North America, photocopying came to be popularly known as “xeroxing.” Xerox has actively fought to prevent “Xerox” from becoming a genericized trademark. However, soon it became one. While the word “Xerox” has appeared in some dictionaries as a synonym for photocopying, Xerox Corporation commonly insists that such entries are modified to protect the term “Xerox” as the one attributed namely to it. In some languages we can find hybrid terms, such as the widely used Polish term kserokopia (“xerocopy”), even though relatively few photocopiers were actually sold under the Xerox brand.

Interesting fact is that Xerox had competitors-bristling market to operate, but it managed to head over it. This company tried to be the first and it won over the market. The company still remains an independent market player.

I consider that the reason of such generalization and retention of the word ‘Xerox’ doesn’t actually own to the world success of the company, but to the fact that Xerox Corporation was a pioneer in the Soviet copier market. In 1968 the first technological exhibition with international participation was held in Soviet Union, where Xerox first showed its machines to Soviet officials and technicians. No sooner than in 1974 an office in Moscow was set up. From that moment onwards, generations of Soviet office workers knew no other brand but Xerox.

To the day, in spoken language all copiers (regardless of the manufacturers) are often referred to as xeroxes, together with photocopies made with them (referred to as “Xeroxes”). Also, in common parlance, you can find a derivative verbs: ‘xerit’ (meaning to make photocopies), ‘otkserit’ (to be through with photocopying of some documents) , as well as the sacrament (otkserenny).

Interesting is the fact that Canon was the first to supply copying equipment (“Canon”) to Mongolia. As a result, this word has taken root in the Mongolian language, and all copiers in this country are by now referred to “canons”.

Sources:

- [1] www.xerox.com , официальный сайт компании Rank Xerox Worldwide
- [2] *Christian Gram, Per Rasmussen, Søren Duus Østergaard* History of Nordic Computing 4: 4th IFIP WG 9.7, 2005
- [3] *Benjamin Gomes-Casseres*, The Alliance Revolution: The New Shape of Business Rivalry, Harvard University Press, 2007