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CHICAGO: Siemens, the engineering and electronics firm, has successfully changed perceptions of the company by partnering with Disney to 'Americanise' the brand.

Siemens was seen as a German company, despite a US history dating back to the Civil War, Darren Sparks, Siemens USA's director/strategic marketing alliances, told a conference audience. But with clients and prospects eager to "buy American" there was a pressing need to enhance its local credentials.

"The problem was that we lacked American identity," he said. "We needed to 'Americanise' the brand" and to do it in a particular way. "This was about 'Americanising' the brand for our sales team," Sparks explained.

A 12-year "strategic alliance" with Disney, the entertainment icon, addressed the immediate issue in a number of ways. (For more, including the development of a '360-degree' business model, read Warc's exclusive report: [How working with Disney helped Siemens succeed the American way.](#))

"We wanted activation 365 days a year. There are very few opportunities out there that can give that to you every single day," Sparks said. "And that was the power of what the Disney brand could bring to us, not just through a theme-park setting, but through all their digital assets, their networks, the family of companies at Disney."

This affiliation had also helped to humanise the technology supplied by Siemens. "We wanted millions of consumers to be able to interact with our products and solutions that are very high-tech and advanced," Sparks observed. "But, previously, there wasn't a real way to do that to the masses."

Siemens is now able to achieve that through the supply of technology for Disney's theme parks which not only gives sales people a story to tell but also attracts the attention of executives on vacation.

"Someone will be in the park and they will write us a note and say, 'Hey, I had no idea Siemens did this, this and this. But my kids were interacting with your exhibits, and I'm totally intrigued with your healthcare stuff. Can you tell me about digital records?' And that has led to a sale," said Sparks.

A bonus for Siemens is that its 19 internal units were able to present a more unified outlook to the rest of the world. Prior to the Disney tie-up each unit had managed its own sponsorship arrangements, resulting in an occasionally incoherent and inefficient approach.

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But Disney, said Sparks, "crosses all 19 lines of businesses, and that's the first criteria before we can look at scale".

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