Recently, a scandal with Wal-Mart has risen due to the company’s quest to better their image. While Wal-Mart is an extremely successful worldwide company, it has faced its fair share of controversy and scandal over the years. To ameliorate this, Wal-Mart enlisted Edelman Worldwide, a public relations firm, to work on bettering its reputation and image. However, the plan put in place by Edelman Worldwide ended up causing even more controversy for Wal-Mart. The company hired a fake “married” couple to travel across the United States in an RV with the task of visiting various Wal-Mart locations and writing daily positive blog posts about the stores. Several aspects of this “trip” were not disclosed to the public, including the fact that the RV and travel costs were paid for by the organization, Working Families for Wal-Mart. When *Business Week* revealed the true details of the RV excursion to the public, there was backlash from bloggers, magazines, and other commentators. However, the public did have a right to be angry with Wal-Mart over this fake blog, or “flog”. Misleading the public, even when the goal is to create a better image, can truly harm a company’s reputation due to lost client trust and respect. In this case, Wal-Mart did more harm than good to their reputation by misleading the public by violating the basic ethical principles that are valued by customers.

Wal-Mart is a well-known worldwide company for many reasons, both good and bad. However, when the bad - the scandals, controversies and rumors - are broadcasted in the media, they often have a serious effect on the company’s reputation. In the past, Wal-Mart has been investigated by a lobbying group called Wal-Mart Watch, which aims to expose Wal-Mart for the supposed mistreatment of its employees. With this ongoing scandal, Wal-Mart should have been extremely cautious with its marketing plans and careful not to lose the public’s trust and respect again. However, instead of creating an ethical plan that would gain respect and trust from the public, Wal-Mart instituted a plan that was based on false identities and an undisclosed financial agreement. This was not an effective way to better the company’s image. Creating a false blog meant to attract customers to the company actually had the opposite effect when the public realized they were being misled.

There are many different, more effective ways that Wal-Mart could have worked on bettering its image. In order for a major company to maintain an excellent reputation, they must embody the philosophies of Corporate Social Responsibility, which includes following economic, legal, ethical, and social guidelines. By creating a fake blog, Wal-Mart seriously violated ethical business principles. Bloggers are supposed to be held to a certain ethical standard because they are presenting information for a large public to read. When the public cannot trust what they are reading about a company in a blog, they are much less likely to respect and support the company. After the fake blog scandal, Wal-Mart became a very difficult company to trust, which negatively affected their reputation.

Although Wal-Mart is a highly successful worldwide company, there are still many problems with the company as a whole. Ineffective methods were used to try to better the company’s image, which in turn ended up hurting its overall reputation. Considering previous negative media attention about Wal-Mart, such as Wal-Mart Watch’s entire platform, the company appears to have a pattern of unethical practices. Smart marketing includes following basic ethical principles so that the public feels that they can trust the company. By misleading the public and violating ethical principles with its fake blog, Wal-Mart did not market their company effectively. Maintaining an excellent reputation is crucial to the success of a large company. After many scandals and controversies, Wal-Mart could definitely use marketing improvement, especially in the ethical aspects of the company.