
Title: Building a strong brand

Objective: To help you sell more, more profitably

According to a recent Mori survey amongst board directors of leading UK blue chip companies, “94% agree that the asset which offers the greatest protection during an economic downturn is a strong brand”. Perversely, “less than a third of them feel that their brand offers them a great deal of protection”!

Your brand: it's not just a name, a logo or even a corporate identity. It's the personality of your business; the intrinsic values of everyone in your business, from the chairman and the board of directors, through the senior management and every single employee within the organisation. It should be understood by your suppliers – and your distributors.

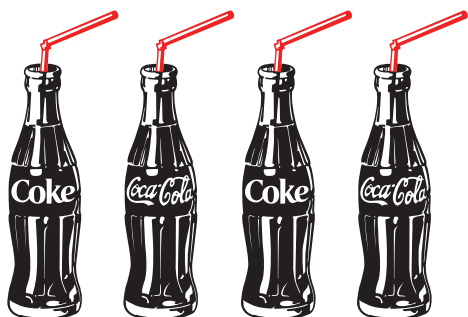
Most important of all: your brand is the promise you make to your customers.

But what about the promise your brand makes to you?

Here's the promise: in any competition, the strongest brand has the least need to compete on price.

Here's the result: Because it doesn't compete on price, a strong brand adds the extra bit of margin that goes straight to the bottom line.

Here's the question: How do you go about building a strong brand?



The 4 key elements of brand building

Strategy

What does your company want to be known for?
How does every product you sell and every service you offer fit in with the master strategy of your brand?

Positioning

How you take your brand to market. How do you want to be seen in the minds of your customers, your employees, your suppliers and your distributors? How will you differentiate yourself from the competition ... for the better? What is your company's personality?

Identity

Your visual identity supports your brand positioning. Which takes us to consistency – all your communications should have the same look and feel; this is the creative embodiment of your brand.

Consistency

Apply this single test to everything you do with the brand:

Is what I am about to do consistent with all the branding elements?

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The creative brief

The four key elements above are the essential ingredients of a strong brand. However, without consistent execution on a daily level, they might as well stay in the file in your laptop marked “Great ideas that never happened”.

Once you have your strategy in place – how you want to be known – and your personality – how you want to be thought of – you have to communicate with your audiences (internally and externally).

“How are we going to differentiate ourselves from the competition? What voice do we use? How do we look?”

Establishing a creative brief that provides guidance to everyone involved in communicating with your audiences is critical to providing a consistent approach in all your marketing collateral.

Expect your creative thinkers – the writers and designers – to take your brief and run with it. Expect ideas that will enhance and embellish and add value to, but which will never undermine, your brand position.



A shining example of something that has become more than just a brand.

The visual identity

More than just a logo ... although the logo is a starting point. This is the visual element that aids recognition of your company by its audiences. It's a brand mark. It can incorporate a name, or a strap-line, or it can just be a graphic design.

At its most successful, your logo will be instantly recognisable and will immediately convey the desired understanding of your brand personality. It is the ultimate goal – it will only happen when all the elements of your brand are working together.

More than just a logo ... the visual identity is a set of guidelines which will enable you to manage the look and feel of all your marketing collateral: advertisements, brochures, web sites, e-mails and e-marketing materials; catalogues and so on. The consistency of the visual identity will strengthen and enhance your brand.

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The brand voice

This is the way you translate your personality into the way you speak and the way you write about your company.

You can change the tone of your voice ... it can be serious, humorous, informative, persuasive – in fact it can vary as much as your own voice – but it needs to be completely recognisable wherever it appears; in an advertisement, on an email, in a press release or in a sales leaflet. It's what differentiates you from your competitors.

A consistent voice will strengthen your brand. The objective should be for your customer to see your logo and immediately identify it with your voice – so they immediately understand your personality – and want your product.

Think Coca Cola, Apple, McDonalds, IBM, Microsoft ...

So how do you go about creating brand voice guidelines?

Assuming you know who your customers are – or who you want them to be – then you need to get into their minds:

- 1 The key is to write a positioning statement – short and to-the-point: what is the unique place you want your company to occupy in the minds of your customers?
- 2 Define your company's personality. What are the defining characteristics of your brand?
- 3 What are the main messages that will strengthen your desired position in the minds of your customers? What will make that position credible and believable?
- 4 Be consistent in the way your company supports the brand strategy on a daily basis – ensure that all communications comply with the positioning statement.



How the brand is used may have developed, but the primary element is unchanged.

The brand book

Create an accessible set of guidelines for your brand so that everyone involved in managing and administering its communication – including your agencies – will easily understand it.

Reinforce the message: create the brand book using your own brand voice and your own visual guidelines. Sounds obvious, but it's surprising how often this simple rule is overlooked ...

The guidelines you create within the book are organic: there should be no inherent change, but they will undoubtedly have to be regularly updated as new questions are asked. No matter how thorough you are, there will always be something missed out – and new technologies and your increasing use of different media will demand new interpretation of the guidelines.

Once you've created the brand book, manage it ...

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Managing the brand

- Before you take your brand into your marketplace, make sure that everyone at every level in the company is aware of your brand values. They are all ambassadors – so they all need to be aware of where they fit in the process of delivering brand success. In the case of the call centre operative, this is easily defined, monitored and managed. But what about the outworker whose job it is to stick the label onto the outside of one of your products?

Everyone within the business not only has to know what they do as individuals, but also the importance of what they do within the context of the company.

- The larger and more geographically diverse the business is, the harder it will be to manage the brand – both internally and externally. The same rules apply – but don't confuse "managing the brand" with "marketing the brand".

Different regions and countries may require a completely different approach in how the brand is presented – but the strength of the brand itself relies on the consistency of its visual identity and its voice.

- Consider a regular brand audit. Run an annual check on the advertising, the brochures, the packaging. See how far they have drifted over the course of twelve months – and then pull them back into line.
- If the level of business warrants it, consider using an online resource (such as Chillifish's TIM™, our Totally Integrated Marketing system) to run the project management and proofing of all marketing materials. TIM can store all your assets – photographs, diagrams, videos, copy etc – making them available to your marketing teams and your suppliers while ensuring that there is a consistency in visual implementation and voice.

Summary

It hasn't been the intention of this brief document to do anything other than summarise a number of the elements of branding, many of which you already will be aware of.

Occasionally, however, a timely reminder of the value of a strong brand is very necessary ... no more so than in turbulent times such as these, when competition is increasing, margins are being squeezed, and we are all running faster to stand still.

Marketing and branding are not one and the same. The success of each discipline relies on very different criteria. But they are both critical components of the sales process – and all three are tied together in creating the long-term profitability of your company.

At Chillifish we believe our job is to help our clients sell more, more profitably.

And a big part of this is achieved by turning up their brand volume.



The swoosh and red colour define the brand as much as the name.

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