Brighter Branding

Best Practices for the Smaller Business

Athol M. Foden

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If you are not a dummy, but were too busy studying science or engineering or finance to cover branding in college, here is the practical, tactical cookbook that is based on good, sound, simple strategies to get you up to speed fast:

- **Discover:** Your own brand, whatever your size.
- **Analyze:** Quickly find your brand values and position. Practical discovery methodologies any team can implement.
- **Implement:** Why branding permeates all your company, customers and partners and how to easily enforce it.
- **Strategy:** Branding is not your business plan, mission or values. So how do you grow its value?
- **Protection:** From the service department to manufacturing and accounting, to all of engineering and marketing, it is easy to grow your brand if you inspire and lead (and understand yourself).
- **Product or Services:** Branding through product design and actions, not marketing dollars.
- **Methodologies:** Based on the experienced practices of good consultants. Now you don't have to pay them a lot of money to tell you all of this.
- **Caution:** May offend some of your creative agencies - because it involves the whole company not just one rah rah department or campaign. And it certainly is not about spending more money.

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1. THE GOLDEN THREAD

A Brand is:

> A name
> A logo
> A mark or symbol
> A famous company or product
> A set of values
> A name and logo
> An advertised product
> An identity
> An image in someone's brain
> One's perceptions and feelings about a product

When I ask a group of students or non-marketeers what a Brand is, these are the typical kind of answers I hear. If you read a lot of fancy consumer books on the subject, they so often take a different tack and produce high brow quotes like: "The sum total of all the buyers impressions and values associated with a product".

However, if you are the marketer of the product, the answer is very simple:

A Brand is a Promise

Perhaps you want to print that statement out as big as possible and stick it on your wall. Your brand is not your corporate mission and strategy. It is neither your slogan nor your "elevator" pitch, nor your name and logo, nor the values under which your founder went into business.

To clarify a brand even further, a promise of what? Well, that is also simple to state:

A Brand is a Promise of an Experience

At every branding meeting and other marketing, sales, support, engineering and other business discussions, if you remember nothing else other than *your brand is your promise to your customers of their experience with your company, products and service*, then you will be way ahead of the non brand-centric competitors.

A brand exists solely in the customer's mind. It cuts through the clutter of marketing and product messages and carries an implicit and powerful message of differentiation. The experience of this brand promise creates loyalty. This is both an emotional and factual bond between you and your customers, however technical the products or services.

BRAND DEVELOPMENT

So now that you know what a brand is, please answer the following little quiz:

The most important thing in developing a brand is:

1. P.R.
2. Advertising
3. Packaging
4. Design
5. Quality
6. Color
7. Name
8. Technical Features
9. Customers
10. User Benefits
11. Trust

When this question is asked in a marketing class or non-marketing department, a lot of the votes end up being placed for items 1 to 5 in particular. But when this question is asked of branding professionals, 95% of the votes are for item 11 – Trust.

Once again, we have an elegantly simple answer to a very complex question:

The most important factor in developing a brand is trust.

Successful brands represent trust. It is the glue that binds a customer to the product. Trust is the foundation of choice.

Easily said. Very hard to achieve! Which department in your technology startup is in charge of trust? Who can we delegate to do this? What will it cost and how do we make it? Should we hire an advertising agency? Please say, 'No' – they do advertising. Rather brands are built across all departments, as you will see later. For example, the internet was like the wild wild west in its early days and there were lots of "technology cowboys" involved. But now marketing has to find rules and boundaries for creating a trusting relationship and most users have migrated to brand name service and equipment providers.

Do you have to develop a brand to sell your products? No, of course not. In fact, for a few products or services it may even be a complete waste of time and money. But most products are sold to people. Most investors are people too. Humans are brand buyers. They want to trust the products they buy. They want a positive experience. They want to spend their money with confidence. They want to be informed, supported and treated as individuals. They don't have much time to research every single detail of every purchasing decision. Especially when it is for their business and not for themselves.

Have you noticed how few generic products are on the shelves at your local supermarket? Even the bananas and tomatoes have stickers on them nowadays. At the home hardware store, the signs even proclaim, "genuine Oregon pine lumber", or "Idaho seed potatoes", or "Dutch bulbs". At the computer hardware store, notice how even the disk drives have rich names, and how you trust your data much more to be stored on a disk drive or memory stick from a 'brand-

name' manufacturer.

The only place where generics have achieved some market traction is at the pharmacy counter. But think about it. We trust the promise of the FTC as well as our doctor and our pharmacist that such drugs are good and safe. And we are shopping for them in a reputable brand name drug store that we trust to lead the community's health supply needs!

If you don't consciously manage and develop your brand, the marketplace will implicitly develop it for you. Perhaps even with conflicting message help from your different product, sales, and marketing campaigns. It may take a long time. It may not come out the way you like. It may even have many business, financing and legal pitfalls along the way. What could be worse than that? If you don't build your brand and position your products and company, your competitors might do it for you!

But if you do manage and feed and develop a brand, what will the payoffs be for your company? Well firstly, it has sometimes been said, that marketing's primary function is to shorten the sales cycle. No where is this more true than in branding. A good, or at least known brand name, will:

- Accelerate all aspects of the sales cycle
- Dramatically reduce the purchasing decision time
- Allow for improved price protection
- Allow for better product margins
- Create company value and awareness with every product sale
- Improves valuation of your company
- Speed all your operational business transactions
- Simplify many operational and administrative ones
- Allow you to rapidly bring new products to market
- Create instant awareness for new strategies
- Allow you to more easily enter new marketplaces
- Provide you access to more senior executives, part ners, and organizations

A brand does not have to be a company or a product. It can be a place, a person, a group, a hospital, a university and, of course, a service. Many technology companies emphasize their Silicon Valley roots, even though there is no such place on the map! But certain promises are implicit in the use of the term. Similarly, graduating from a brand name university is definitely going to speed up your time to a job offer and a bigger salary. And you are going to help spread the brand, by your words, actions, clothing and bumpers stickers. For example, as an ex-Harvard grad, you may even name your firm Crimson Consulting as Glenn Gow did. With this clever move, he is 'borrowing' a little of their prestige, aura and brand values.

A brand can be a real person like Oprah Winfrey or a cartoon character like Dilbert. It can be a company like H-P, Oracle, Intel, Apple or Intuit. It can be a product like LaserJet, Dreamweaver, Pentium, iMac or QuickBooks. And for many other companies, the company and product family are the same brand, like at Cisco, Cypress, Brocade, EMC2, eBay and Yahoo.

BRAND PRACTICES

A brand program is not a business plan. It is neither a strategy nor a marketing campaign. Regis McKenna, the doyen of public relations in Silicon Valley, wrote and spoke extensively on the subject of "marketing is too important to be left to the marketing department" a few years back. Wow! How are we going to run and organize our business now if marketing functions are not confined to the marketing department?

Well, for branding that type of statement has never been more true. The marketing department may be the stewards and shepherds of the brand. But branding is far too important to be left to any one department. At the same time, branding does not justify its own department. And in many companies, it does not justify even one dedicated person. Especially those with less than 200 employees unless their strategy is extremely brand-centric. The chief brand manager for Dilbert is Scott Adams, for Oracle it is Larry Ellison, for Micro-

soft it was Bill Gates, for The Chasm Group it is Geoffrey Moore. These people are brands in their own right to a large extent.

So if it is neither a business plan nor a strategy, and a brand is this intangible item called a promise of an experience, how are we going to create and manage it?

Here is a suggestion to keep everyone focused on doing the best they can for the brand:

> **Your brand is the Golden Thread that runs through all your product, business, and customer actions.**

Knowing your brand, its values, and what promise it stand for, can greatly simplify and focus many of your business decisions. At the same time, keeping this golden thread of values at all times will help preserve it.

Allow it to grow in value. Branding is not something that happens overnight. Customers have to experience you and your services in order to trust, believe and propagate that message. In real estate, the old saying is "Location, Location, Location". Well in branding, the equivalent mantra is "Consistency, Consistency, Consistency".

Oops, did we just hit a disconnect?

Isn't technology all about speed of change and time to market? How can we do branding that takes time and consistency, when we are in an ever-changing field?

Remember, a brand is a promise. It is not a product, a name nor a campaign. If we set our values and adhere to them, if you are consistent in your brand promise, then your technology, your markets, your products can change, and not only will the brand endure, it will grow and prosper. But all involved need to protect and respect the

usage of the brand in all its applications.

Throughout its heady growth, Jeff Bezo's mantra at Amazon has been "the ultimate customer experience". And not "we have the largest variety of books and CD's"! Today Jeff heads one of the biggest brands in cyberspace. He has created a major brand barrier to entry for would-be competitors.

Individual actions can be short term. A real branding program is never short term. Because it involves many more people inside and outside your company than you might expect. It must be "policed". It must be adhered to and always be consistent. As an employee of a company, your personal responsibility is to adhere to and promote the brand. If you don't like it, you only have two options:

1. Get all management to agree on changing it
2. Leave the company

Otherwise, you promote and preserve it. Just like your personal name, image and set of values. Live up to them or change them. Or don't bother dreaming of being a success.

Brands are built on five principals:

Presence   -   Visibility in the marketplace
Relevance   -   To the customers
Differentiation -   Unique value proposition
Credibility   -   Product experiences
Image   -   The perceived product

Keep these in mind as you read the following chapters, then in Chapter 20 we will take a more practical look at brand management through integrated marketing when we have a clearer idea of what we are trying to achieve.

2. BRAND VALUES

Your brand's thread of gold is different to your competitors. Yes, even different to your direct competitor's across the street. They might both be solid, well established and shiny. But they are different. Just like the competing CEO's have the same functions to perform, they are different people. They might both be successful. They probably manage differently applying the use of different strategies and techniques in common situations differently. Yahoo, Bing and Google are all great search engines. All are extremely powerful brand names on the Internet that deliver on a great promise of an experience – but they are different experiences.

So, strange as it may seem, the place to start building, repairing or changing a brand is not with the name. It is with the values. The brand values. Not the company founders' values or the board of directors' charter. A thread of gold may be long or short, shiny or matte, smooth or rough, flexible or stiff, thick or thin, straight or knotted. Just like your values vary. But it still is a thread of gold that runs all through your actions. As mentioned before, if you don't create it, the marketplace and competitors might. And it might be good. But it will surely take time and may not be what you want. It might end up being dull, lifeless, stodgy, awkward and frayed!

To ensure your brand promise sets out and maintains the right course, you need to get the management and marketing teams together to agree on a clear set of brand values. Ones that are achievable and consistent and appropriate with:

- Your management style, visions and dreams
- Your top management's group personality
- Your product/service capabilities
- Your desired position in the marketplace
- Your distance from direct competitors
- Your ability to deliver
- Your distribution channel and other partners

- Your key customers' needs and desires

For those of you accustomed to consumer marketing or branding, you may think this list is upside down. That is true. But major consumer brands take years to develop, are driven by the end user desires, needs and benefits, and are often not tightly tied to the corporate brand at all. Plus they are fighting to enter very crowded (in fact often already over saturated) markets, have big marketing budgets, and, of course, are appealing to personal desires and needs, as opposed to business to business needs.

VALUES EXERCISE

Before you pick a name or logo for your company, before you start the marketing for a new product line, before you spin-off or reorganize a division, before you start a new service or distribution channel, get all your top management together. Don't let them leave the room until they all agree on your core set of values. Not the bosses. Not the product managers. The whole team, with sales and marketing representing the customers' viewpoints.

```
Attitude     Leader      Intellectual   Traditional
Fun          Trust       Class          New Wave
Racy         Pioneer     Edgy           Modern
Masculine    Pure        Powerful       Competent
Original     Dynamic     Feminine       Focused
Futuristic   Sleek       Musical        Scientific
Artistic     Loyalty     Playful        Descriptive
Serious      Respect     Sharp          Passionate
Unique       Agile       Soft           Sporty
Technical    Safe        All Business   Hip
Fresh        WarmFuzzy   Conservative   Innovative
Healthy      Caring      International  Fashionable
Youthful     Fragile     Growth         Historic
Communal     Childlike   Solid          Flexible
Local        Distributed Serving        Academic
Macho        Familiar    Fast           Speedy
Friendly     Obsessive
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Figure 2-1

Using the randomly ordered list in Fig. 2-1 have all team members (working alone) mark what they believe are the company's tangible values. They may select as many as they like at this stage without regards to priorities, and even add some of their own if need be.

Write all the selections on the board. See which values get the most votes. Debate them all and decide which ones survive. Vote on the top five. Revisit to see if these are achievable or blue sky or a pipe dream. Briefly discuss if these top five values would really still be at the top if you surveyed your customers. Yes? Great. No, you have a brand gap!

Repeat the exercise for your top three competitors. Does their brand have different values (as perceived by the outside world) to yours? Usually the answer is yes. If not, you may want to revisit your list so that your brand personality develops differently from theirs.

And if your top 4 values came out something like:

Technology Leader, Innovative, Speed

Then you need to go back and redo the exercise.

Why? Because you then sound like every other technology startup. Boring and non-descript with brand vales that you cannot live up to in the long term. Remember that products come and go, brands endure. Plus, even more importantly, where are the human feelings/ actions in these values? You need some, however technical your products may be. They will be created and sold by people. People who might as a team exhibit characteristics like fun, witty, passionate, friendly, warm, academic, serious, professional, agile, etc.

Before you move on, print these brand values in your company newsletter and post them on your intranet.

3. THE BRAND NAME

How many chances do you get to make a good first impression?

> **"Your name is your most powerful weapon in the battle for the mind"**
>
> *...Positioning: Ries and Trout*

Prior to their public launch back in the early 80's, Ben Rosen had Bridge Gate computers change their name to Compaq (with the help of a naming agency I might add). Suddenly the brand-to-be came to life and had a vitality that has endured ever since being taken over by H-P. Even though today, very few of the Compaq line are compact or portable.

I provide this simple example as more likely being the exception to the rule, rather than the norm today. Very direct, descriptive words, even coined variations thereof, are very hard to find and are usually highly impacted in any name space. This is especially true in high technology where management is so often still stuck on analyzing the immediate descriptive values of a name, rather than focusing its suitability as the legally available shorthand nomenclature for a unique brand experience.

It is not unusual for companies to spend months (if not years) performing research and development. Striving to find a breakthrough, one that is quite unique or a greatly simplified technical or business solution - and even alternative potential solutions. Studying the competition from many different angles, investigating the distribution channels, price points and potential end-user needs and pain points. This is done before funding, but continues forever afterwards.

Yet how little time do they devote to what their company or product stands for? Do they even know the implicit brand personality of their company, management team and product lines? Have they ever

analyzed all their possible brand values and established a prioritized list of who/what they want to be? Is this a different position to any competitors and does it portray a totally unique value proposition?

So before you start the naming exercise, first make sure you have completed a study of your brand values and your competitor's brand values. Ensure you have a thorough understanding of all the names used in your space already, both by direct and indirect competitors, as well as all the industry and distribution channel infrastructure.

Your name can only do so much for you. It does not need to describe what you do – in fact it should not or you will outgrow it in rapid fashion. Or worse, for a new company or product brand, it will be abbreviated and become YASI (Yet Another Set of Initials) and no one will know it without major marketing dollars being spent to promote your obscure initials. EMC is an exception, because they were trying to be Einstein centric by using a little 2 next to the name.

In a later chapter we will explore taglines and slogans to establish the current positioning so that it does not have to be in the name itself.

When you look at major semi-conductor companies in Silicon Valley, only two old ones have descriptive names: Advanced Micro Devices – now in reality only called AMD, and National Semiconductor. But when you study the names of the other chip and network companies: Cypress, Sycamore, Cisco, Intel, Brocade, Altera, Hynix, Phillips, Nortel, Redback, Juniper, you can barely see the forest for the trees!

Someone once told me they were looking for a great name for a networking company. One that really implied networking. When I quoted this previous list to him, he was practically salivating at the mouth…."Yes, yes" he said. Yet when I grinned and asked him what his favorite tree was, he was dumb founded!

Once again, a brand is a promise of an experience. Your brand name is the name you give to this promise. It is not the product or com-

pany. It is simply the most elementary verbal shorthand for this experience you wish to create. There are some cases, where any name (that is legally available) will do, especially for components that have hundreds of varieties. But even embedded components can benefit from the implicit industry, vendor, distributor and employee branding that comes from association with a good trademark. Not to mention the legal intellectual property and positioning that comes from a great name.

Have you noticed how the Japanese giants ride their great brand names to continued success? Even as they move their manufacturing to ever cheaper locales around the world, you, as the buyer, still believe in Sony, Mitsubishi, Hitachi, Fujitsu, Panasonic, Quasar, National, etc. Now can you mention two Chinese or Taiwanese companies that endure the same sort of brand power?

But all the good names are taken - you say. What is a product manager or president to do? Someone once said that if you think all the good names are taken then you don't understand branding. This is an extreme viewpoint, but not too far off the truth. For example, here are some younger brands that have already made it to the major leagues in terms of worldwide brand recognition:

Starbucks, Yahoo, Amazon, eBay, Cisco, Google

Apart from the incredible valuations these names bestow on their companies (regardless of product offerings), they have become synonyms in our daily language. You can probably match the words Auctions, Coffee, Bookstore, Networking and Search Engine with these brands, even as a recent immigrant to the US from some far afield foreign land.

Yet nothing in Starbucks says coffee and very few people know the origin of the name. Yahoo is a cowboy who has lost some marbles (according to the dictionary). Amazon is a big river in Brazil. eBay is wherever you want it to be (though its logo is in strikingly similar colors to the old one for East Bay Transit). And Cisco is half a town

name (which always makes me always wonder why their logo is not half a Golden Gate bridge).

Some people can design embedded processors. Some people can design peripherals and networks. Others can design computers and massive software systems. Certain people can write technical manuals or white papers or even novels. While some people can do marketing, accounting, management, consulting or sales. Yet all of these workers in a typical technology company, many may share other talents or interests such as music, or sports or hobbies. So too there are also people who can do naming.

It is not and never will be a college course. It definitely requires creative positioning, marketing, language and word skills. But other than that, it is very hard to know who has the skill set. Like all professionals, those who are the best are the ones who practice the most. The top writers are the ones who write an awful lot. The top designers are those who have tried and failed and studied and toiled until they got it right, with a single-minded dedication and focus. Is it any wonder that Tiger Woods spends more time practicing, with good tools and coaches, than practically any other golfer?

Likewise, with good namers - they come from all walks of life. They have a continual interest and fascination with names. They have created and researched thousands of names (and continue to do so), and are so familiar with the given name spaces within which they practice. They have also taken the time to study the language side of the science, as well as the huge legal side of name clearance. They too have an innate sense of marketing, image and positioning. Plus, they have empathetic finally honed listening skills to pick up on all the nuances of a management teams personality, comfort level and desires. Finally, they have the tools and databases to work from. They possess the humility to know that good naming, like good writing, comes from the editing and rewriting. It is usually a team effort and always from a very large pool of initial names and roots.

The English language is derived from three roots: Latin, Anglo Saxon and Germanic. So we usually have three words where other

languages have one. Which is why English has so many more words than any other. But most of the word-side branding efforts in most industries, and especially in technology, is very English language centric. Thus, the most common words are already taken as names, not to mention many family names.

Furthermore, trademarks are filed phonetically. So Sysco, Cisco, and Sisco are all the same in the eyes of the USPTO (Patent and Trademark Office). Trademarks are fortunately filed by international class. Everyone will be happy as long as Sysco stays in the food business (Class 35 for food distribution services like many others for sweeteners, food and healthcare products). Cisco needs to stay in the networking business (Class 9), and Sisco remains in the document shredding and storage business (Class 42).

Just like we have National Car Rental and National Semiconductor, and many other National trademarks. However, none of these own the word "National" and are therefore considered weaker trademarks. Especially when compared with the very unique ones that have reached super brand status and cross all classes. Names like Avis, Intel and Sony.

So you can name your new business Internet Consulting Services, as someone did on the San Francisco peninsula, and everyone will know what you do. But how will they find you on the Internet? Type that into any search engine! How do you separate yourself from H-P's Internet Consulting Services, and how will clients accounts payable departments react when they have to pay Internet Consulting Services for Internet consulting services? It becomes really messy.

What if the founder of this company (as a random example) had named it Kazoo with the tagline as Internet Consulting Services? Great, even though initially everyone might say, "What is a Kazoo?" (Make up any answer you are comfortable with). Within a short period, people could be referring business to Kazoo as the best place to go for Internet consulting services. Or better still, "Our internet is down again, call Kazoo." And if the business does more wireless business instead this year, they could change the tagline to

Wireless Consulting Services, but it would still be the same friendly Kazoo you have grown to love and trust (and pay).

The industry analysts will love to talk about you too and not be confused by you being another generic sounding name. Notice how Monster.com stands out of the pack from Jobs.com, HotJobs.com, Thingamajobs.com, BAJobs.com, etc. Just like eBay stands out from Auctions.com and MyAuctions and eAuctions and eWanted.com, etc.

THE NAME PROCESS

A simple study of search engine names shows the wide choice of available name styles for any new industry. Infoseek (now gone) was the only descriptive one. Searchlight is traditional. Yahoo was radical at the time. Google is cute and friendly – despite being based on a mathematical term. Excite is action oriented (and much better than their original Archetype). Mining Company is a great metaphor. Pity they got taken over. Bing is neutral abstract (maybe even boring!). Alta Vista is of classic Latin/Spanish style with an implied position of greatness. Lycos is really from classic Greek, so it will probably not age as much as the others endure longevity and become part of our daily vocabulary. We are sure the lawyers love it too for its uniqueness.

About is confusing and lost in the noise and a naming tragedy compared to their old Northern Light, which was a great guiding star and focus. Go is gone, after a major branding disaster subjecting such famous brands as Disney, ABC, ESPN to a sub-servient position of such a cold heartless, lifeless name (that cost them a few million when they infringed on GoTo's traffic light logo). And Dogpile is a pile of…that is hard to forget but implies it should be avoided.

Naming is a much bigger issue than most people are inclined to believe. At least until they have their first run in with trademark lawyers or marketplace confusion and need to re-think. All the ins and outs, worksheets and details to run a professional naming project in-house are covered in a companion title to this book called Brighter

Names, but for now, here is a summary of a process that works to come up with a good name:

1. Generate a vast amount of names any which way you can. Include a number of people who are neither too close to the company nor the product (run a competition if need be with a physical prize). Shoot for over a thousand names if you are a going concern with more than 20 employees. Over 200 if you are a one-man band. This list should contain names from multiple sources with multiple name styles, including purely abstract.
2. Save absolutely all of these names in a spreadsheet and sort them alphabetically for convenience.
3. Using 3 people with a good sense of image, words and competitive space (they are usually found in the marketing department), pare this list down to about 200+ names (if you started with 1000+).
4. Print this list and facilitate a TOP management meeting where they must select and choose their top 20 names – as jointly agreed on. Remind everyone they are naming the company or product, not describing it.
5. Stop there! Go and check, re-check and check again! Trademarks, common law, industry usage, small company directories, Internet, dictionaries, and so on. Remove names that are used at all in your broad industry space, but add in any variations that come to mind, checking first of course. The name Apple still endures, even though it is a descriptor of a line of deciduous fruits. It is also a registered trademark of The Beatles, and cost Apple $43+million in lost naming legal battles. Similarly Microsoft paid over $6 million when someone else stood up and said he had Internet Explorer first for a program to surf the web.
6. Facilitate another management meeting to show results of checking and now try to whittle this list down to 3 finalist names. This may require more than one meeting, with an interim step at eight to ten names. Expect

to break a lot of hearts and be tough nosed about why certain names cannot be used. Do not be surprised if you have to all go home and sleep on the list for a week or so. Consider printing them big and sticking them on a cubicle wall. See how they feel as you come in each morning. A new unique word is allowed to feel strange initially. Today Pentium® is part of the English language, but to people who first heard it there was a collective sigh of "what?!"

7. Double check your final 3 names. Then send them to your lawyer for a comprehensive check and legal report. In parallel, send them to some linguistic scholar(s) to analyze the roots, origins and meanings, taking special care in foreign languages that are within your future marketing plans. Nowadays, you need clearance in Spanish, Italian, French, German, Hindi, and Japanese just to do technical business in North America.

8. From all these checks and meetings, a final name or two will emerge. In case of two or three finalists, then, and only then, can you think about the visual imagery and potential logos and which marketing messages may go with that name.

9. And finally and most important of all: Use it and register it before you lose it! Use it as soon as possible with the symbol TM and the words "is a trademark of…", and apply for a registered federal trademark as soon as you have a sample of the name in use. (You can do this online yourself nowadays at www.uspto.gov).

As previously mentioned, for a more comprehensive look at naming and the search process, please see the companion book titled **Brighter Names:** *Best Practices in Professional Naming.*

NAME PROTECTION:

Your brand name needs to be trademarked. But your trademark need not be your full tradename. For example, 'Ford' is the trademark and brand name for the business whose tradename is Ford

Motor Car Corporation. This can help give all staff and management more comfort with a new name, as it immediately positions the company until the brand awareness is built.

4. THE BRAND IDENTITY

The heart of a brand is:

A good name   **- for unique mind-share**

A registered trademark   **- without which you have little protection**

And

A professional logo   **- for immediate visual identity**

A brand identity is much more than just a logo, but that is the usual starting point. So, start by noticing that in the statement above it says "A professional logo"! Especially if it is for your company. This is the visual symbol of your brand for a long time to come. Thus, it really is worth investing some money in and obtaining professional help. Whatever you do, do not have anyone who is not a professional graphics artist do it for you - unless they are an award winning designer in some other right.

At a first glance, amateur logos look OK, maybe even interesting or amusing. But long term the flaws will emerge and your competitor's logo may start to have better "legs". Your logo tends to dominate your color choices and palettes going forward. So this is another important decision that is being resolved at this time. Any logo from a half way decent artist looks good when you see it in isolation, especially if it is the first time you are seeing that great new name you sweated over in anything other than a plain font.

To ensure you are doing it right, follow these simple steps:

1. Make sure you review at least 5 or 6 different draft logo treatments. Preferably from 2 or 3 different designers who

have all been briefed on your brand values and personality.

2. Once you have narrowed your choices down to 2 or 3 finalists, try them out in different mock-ups, especially if you are product-centric business.

3. Stack your logo up against all major competitors, as well as other players/partners in your business space. Imagine how yours will compete for mind-share at a tradeshow or in distributors' advertisements. If it has a separate icon or symbol piece, see how that item looks as a standalone against competitors, or on a card, package or partner's website.

4. Select one logo for final treatment – but only amateurs are done at this stage.

5. Now, have a professional do the final tweaks. Ensuring the details on your chosen logo and colors are correct. Amongst other things that will need to be checked are that (a) the logo work in black and white (b) the logo work in very small format for the web and business cards (c) the logo works very large for the day you put it on that giant banner, billboard or office building (this requires detailed zooming in and smoothing of all curves, for example). Also, add the TM symbol so it is part of the logo from the outset – later this will change to ® when you get it registered.

6. Make sure you receive and own all the rights to the logo from your designer, and that it is provided to you in numerous electronic formats. In particular, logos should always be in vector format if possible so they scale smoothly. If all or part of the logo is in a standard graphics font, now is the time to convert it to vector format so it becomes a unique picture, if you have not already done so. Otherwise, your great little bitmap on the web will look like cheap junk the minute you do high gloss or large size print works.

In Ries and Trout's book The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding they claim that all logos should be designed in landscape format, arguing that this is the likely shape of its usage on a billboard or shop sign. I beg to say that is often the case, but not always, and is perhaps today a slightly aged view. There is nothing wrong with a square, round or vertical logo, irrespective of what kind of merchandising you are

going to do in the future.

With regard to color, they are adamant you first look at all your major competitors and then pick the next primary color. For sure, don't be like your competitors! Yet, primary colors are definitely way past there prime and over used. Come on! Just because all the big old dinosaur companies put their logos in red, green, yellow or navy blue doesn't mean you have to! Did your brand values really peg you as such a conservative, old traditionalist? If yes, why not just stay with black and white. Then spend the money on great paper and designs instead? Rather, search for designs that are truly unique or artistic. Designs, that really do imply some kind of feelings, emotions or things.

Nike's famous swoosh isn't just a symbol. It isn't just famous because of all their marketing dollars. It is famous because it is the epitome of the symbol for smooth, fast motion. Exactly what most of us want in a sports product - a traditional artist would probably have given them a winged shoe. Fine, initially. Now would it have worked on Tiger Woods' hat or ball? So part of the magic is a design that will not age too soon nor is too difficult to understand or get. Which is why you may not want to copy any old famous logos. They probably look old unless they have been refreshed lately.

When AT&T spun off Bell Labs, they did a magnificent job (for such a big giant) of coming up with the name Lucent in a fairly rapid time fashion (especially if you knew what a political management team they had, not to mention many traditional lawyers). I thought it was a great name the minute I heard it, and even took the trouble to research its roots. (Hint: It is a standard English word, though you need a very big dictionary to find it). But I also surveyed a number of branding and marketing groups of students to see their opinion, and it was always positive.

Now how about that logo? Different story. Who let the technocrats loose? If it were not for their enormous (and probably wasted) advertising dollars pushing the silly red smudge, no one would recognize it. A propeller head may tell you it is some quantum light image

or other obtuse thing, but everyone knows that internally at Lucent it was popularly known as "the coffee cup stain"! (Personally it always looked like lipstick on a mirror to me). Cost them a big chunk of change too from an agency that shall stay nameless, but is better known for putting names in all lowercase fonts to make "renewed" logos. Today they have merged with Alcatel to form Alcatel-Lucent, where the very brief AL logo does so much better.

A corporate identity is so much more than merely a logo. It defines the complete look and feel of all product, marketing, and physical appearances of the company. At its finest, one can feel the company just in passing. Notice how you can feel you are passing a Starbucks Coffee Shop even before you smell the aroma? Notice how you know you just drove past a Shell gas station without even looking? (And as my youngster pointed out…Dad, they don't even actually use the word Shell anymore!).

Well, if you use your name and brand consistently, and follow systematic style guides, however small you are, then one day not too far off, people will walk passed your tradeshow booth at PC Expo or CES or CeBit or DAC, and just know it. Because at each show every year, you will methodically use the same colors, styles and key icons. Good designers can achieve this without sacrificing creative expression. Make it your own! Stick to it! Do not copy Oracle's or Intel's because they are far too big. They have different names and brand values to you. Good designs for them may not work for you. When people complain to me about their company's logo, image or colors, I do like to emphasize they only have 3 choices:

1. Live with it, use it consistently and right, grin and bear it.
2. Get the whole company to change and agree on a new look, then see (1) above.
3. Quit and find another job.

Seriously, there is no in between. Fiddling with it as the webmaster, changing it subtly or camouflaging it slightly on your product line, using it wrongly in other manners or not using it, are nothing more than corporate internal guerilla identity warfare tactics. If it really is

wrong, show the research and support for change to the president. Take the initiative to start a new identity project, then get everyone to switch over in a timely fashion.

At one place I worked I grinned and bore many a joke over the bad spelling of the company name for quite a while, and finally got the attention of the president by telling him to fire his lawyer! Then suddenly the lawyer got the message that he had been too easily mislead by the state on what name could be used and how it was pronounced. Old time customers barely noticed the name was now spelled right and the logo had a subtle fix. More importantly, new customers are not prone to sniggering.

Finally, while the outside world may not need to know all the details of your corporate identity guidelines, brand values, approved logos and usage, taglines, designs, etc., does it not beg the question "Why not?" You have many vendors and partners to interact with in your industry. If Hitachi and Texas Instruments can put this information on their public websites (albeit buried way down), why can't you? Then all your communications agencies, packaging vendors, partners, distributors, customers and authorized resellers and others can have immediate and correct access, so they can help propagate your brand correctly. Not to mention, the press and other media people. Like busy little bees they can pollinate many other messaging mediums with your proper brand image.

So place all your corporate and product identity style guides and brand values on your Internet and Intranet sites, along with proper artwork, samples and usage guidelines. Then make sure all your departments and partners know where they can find it.

Finally, the three top functions for building brand identity are:

Consistency
Consistency
Consistency

5. BRAND PERSONALITY

Every company and every group has its own personality. Two competing companies with equal market share, working out of the same town, will have totally different personalities even if both of their founders graduated in the same year from the same college. Group personality is a natural phenomenon of human nature, and how people interact and are affected by their environment. In many cases, the personality of the company (or organization or other group) is strongly affected by that of the founder or their leader. This can be very dramatic, as we all know in the cases of political parties. Besides, if you have such a dominant public personality leader like Oracle (Larry Ellison) or Siebel (Tom Siebel) or Microsoft (Steve Ballmer), then realize that you are not going to be able to waiver far away from that person's own characteristics.

The same applies to brands, since brands are promises of experiences – by people. People interacting with you, your company, your products and services, your dealers and distributors, your industry analysts and their own peers, competitors and visionaries. Earlier on we touched on this subject looking to find your brand values. Hopefully, those are now firm and everyone in the company knows your top five brand values by heart (well…at least the top three).

Two soldiers in the same troop may subscribe to the same set of values, but they will surely have different personalities. In any group of any nationality, you well know someone will be serious, someone will be friendly, while someone else will be systematic and methodical and others will simply like to charge in feet first. There will be some energetic people to get you out the door and get you going, and some will do some preparation and planning and make sure you arrive home in one piece. These personality traits are by far and large governed by your genes and your environment as you grew up.

If you don't plan for a brand personality, one will emerge anyway. Just like when you do your strategic corporate messaging and positioning. If you don't plan and monitor and direct it, the marketplace and your competitors will position you in the eyes of prospects where they want you to be positioned. But what if you do plan for a brand personality? This doesn't have to take so long and it can dramatically shorten and focus all your other management, marketing, product and sales distribution strategies later.

Whenever ideas are flowing freely in all directions, which usually happens around creative people, someone just has to stand up and ask, "Is this in line with our brand values and personality?" – Boom! Instant focus and direction, with a massive saving in wasted corporate man-hours.

Now if you are coming from a consumer marketing background, especially one that is fairly well known, you might state how many hours and hours you spent on these subjects. For many technologists, however, I have found how little time is actually put into these aspects of strategy and marketing. This is not a criticism. It is normal since most engineers and accountants are a little uncomfortable outside of their discrete realm where answers and solutions need to be specific and right or wrong. As a former software engineer, I certainly thought I could program my way to any success when I was younger too!

Personality is all about attitudes and mannerisms, and emotions and feelings and also psychology. Things you cannot engineer accurately at all. They are like nature. There are numerous patterns and similarities, yet everything is somehow different. Ten spruce trees may all stand tall in a row and be easily identifiable as spruce trees. However, as soon as you get close, you see that they all have completely different branch and leaf patterns. A gardener can line them down the walkway to make a pattern and create a distinctive feeling as you drive in. Or he can use palm trees instead. Same driveway, same town, very different feeling. In fact, in the case of a resort for example, he has even affected the brand personality right there!

Consider this other example: A few years back we saw the introduction of two new major wireless players. Very advanced technology being taken to the mass markets, driven by some extremely complicated and expensive behind the scenes infrastructure. One consortium of merged carriers called themselves Verizon and one called themselves Cingular. They did the identical thing. If you analyze them cold-heartedly it boils down to who has the best rate plan of the week or coverage for your area.

But when you are shopping for a service in the mall, why will some of us naturally gravitate to the sharp edged, dynamic profile of Verizon? And why will some of us be much more comfortable with the friendly little dancing logo of Cingular? Hmm… do you smell the personality matching going on? Or are you feeling uncomfortable with both of the new kids on the block? Better wander further down the mall and see if you unconsciously stop at AT&T, Sprint or MCI!

These new personalities of Verizon and Cingular were carefully crafted and planned, even before the companies had names or logos. Then, names and logos and identities were chosen that subscribed to their set of values and match the proposed (and tested, I might add) desired personality traits. But they are very different personalities because of different management teams, leaders and heritage, even though the competitors AT&T, MCI and Sprint were the same!
After acquiring all the companies in the Cingular consortium, AT&T has now merged its whole Cingular business into its core, and dropped the name while trying desperately to hang on to some of the more youthful and hip cachet Cingular brought to the table.

Another similar example has been the comparisons between Motorola and Nokia for the actual handsets. Nokia recognized long before Motorola that they were selling personality extension devices, and not just technology leadership tools. In fact, before Motorola even had thought of designer colors, let alone interchangeable skins for their phones. Of course, today, Apple has made both of these companies look old-fashioned.

Process

Now it is time to gather your management team together again. And this time, make sure you include each and every group that touches the customer directly, like education, support, and sales. Even your distribution partners, if you don't deal directly with end users. Make sure international sales are represented too.

You may even want to bring in an outside experienced facilitator, if nothing else, to challenge the group to 'open up' and express their emotions and feelings as well. Someone, who will know how to describe and experience group personalities and brand characteristics. You are not discussing here how to be bigger, better and stronger than the competitors. Marketeers and engineers do that all day long and can finish it later. Firstly, we have to find out what personality we are going to give this baby we are creating. If the facilitator knows your industry, terminology and competitors, so much the better to help you see beyond what you hear in your own little castle. Try to keep the meeting on track. Management gets surprises here and they often want to change things on the spot.

Here is a sample outline to follow:

1. Ask everyone to individually to describe what he or she hears customers and competitors say is their brand personality (or would like to be if you are a startup). All answers are valid from all participants. If some of the same words as used in the brand values exercise re-occur, that is OK. The written language is very lacking in ways to describe these intangibles, but try to use short phrases or metaphors, rather than just words. For example, "warm and friendly, but only when well known to you." Or "we appeal to technical elite only." Or "highly flexible once we get management OK." Be honest. This is internal confidential information. If you are seen as difficult to do business with, say it.
2. Ask the group to do the same thing for their parent company (if one exists). Put these results aside for the moment.
3. Have the group list their top five direct competitors. If you don't

have direct competitors, list indirect and alternative competitors. (If you don't have any competitors at all, then probably no one needs your product and you have a bigger problem).

4. Take a break. Thinking with the emotional section of the brain is stressful for those unaccustomed to it.

5. Now list what personality everyone would like the renewed brand to be.

6. Compare and contrast and debate all the results from these lists. Summarize them down to a few key personalities and cross check. This is sometimes the key part of a brand audit, and you can see the brand gaps, between who you are perceived to be and what you want to be.

7. Finally agree on what you, as a management team, are happy to try to propagate and strive towards. If it is too similar to some other player in your space, do a double check immediately or you may be easily confused in the marketplace. If it is too far different from the president's own personality, then you may want to cycle back. He/She needs to be very comfortable with this position, as they are usually the figureheads for the brand (and unfortunately this is often a major stumbling point for technology brands).

8. Write this agreed personality on one sheet of paper max. Post it prominently for all employees. Go back to your regular job.

Your brand strategy is now simple. Try to create a brand that embodies your brand values and feels and acts like this personality profile. It may be even encapsulated in your tagline, marketing positioning and advertising messages. In some of these cases, the target audience is often internal! *Quality is Job 1* was a great rallying cry for Ford. *Think Different* is doing magic wonders for Apple.

You still have to do your business, engineering, marketing, and financial planning. You probably still have a very separate mission and values creed. But for this product or company you are branding, you have a set of values, an identity, and now a personality profile to guide and focus all your brand services and messaging. (I hate to be a nag, but they are posted on your Intranet, aren't they?)

Plus when you create product personas to guide and focus product development, you can make sure they have most of the brand characteristics. In other words, they look like your children. Some companies use a product persona to be the representative of the total company brand. Once again, it is verbal and visual shorthand so that everyone is focused on the right target customer.

In Appendix A, there is a copy of the complete initial Brand Personality we came up with for Roseann.com. We quickly realized we had too many dreams, too many competitors and too little money to take that position, so it was changed dramatically to focus on a smaller niche market. But we learned fast from this experience and it helped dramatically in getting a new and diverse team onto the same page of thinking.

Footnote: If you are trying to make a real human into a brand, then the personality is a given, except for some minor tweaks. If it is a fictitious character, then guess what Hollywood and writers do every day? They fabricate a personality. Then they give it/him/her a name and a look and feel.

6. TAGLINES AND SLOGANS

Having read this far, you will appreciate that your brand is much more than a name, or a product, or a design. Those items are still not directly descriptive in most cases. Rather, the name and identity should be complimented by a tagline. Similarly evolved and based strongly on your values and personality to establish the current descriptor and positioning, along with all your other marketing messaging statements and collateral. Slogans or taglines are really nice because they can change and evolve more easily, as the company's strategy and position develops. While the terms slogan and tagline are used interchangeably, I prefer the US bias of a tagline being that corporate positioning one second statement for the company, and a slogan being an advertising or marketing phrase that may even have a short lifespan.

Today, Apple's tagline is "Think Different" but way back when it used to be "Computers for the rest of us". Nowadays they don't have to tell everyone they make computers. That is well known worldwide. In fact they make many other devices too, so they have even shortened their company name from Apple Computers Inc to Apple Inc.

Likewise, if your name is Burger King, or Jiffy Lube, or Redback Networks, or Microsoft, then people know something about what you do immediately. There is not the same need for a tagline. Some may still want a slogan or tagline though, like Microsoft's "Where do you want to go today?" It was introduced to establish their new position as an internet-centric micro software house. But if your name has a style like Avis or Cisco or H-P, or Amazon or Yahoo or McDonalds, no one knows what you do until they have experienced your brand or been bombarded with numerous brand impressions. And even when they do know you, how can you succinctly separate your brand promise from the competitors and other items competing for customer mind share?

Since the big consumer product companies don't touch their customers regularly (more about this later), they need to spend heavily on creating brand impressions, usually in the form of advertising or sponsorship. So from Avis we all know the famous (and trademark registered) "We try harder" and lately from McDonalds "We love to see you smile". These are emotional taglines rather than descriptive ones, because by now Avis is synonymous with rental cars and McDonalds is synonymous with burgers.

For most of you, however, a simple tagline can be just as successful as patriotic one like 'God Bless America'. They say so much more than the direct meaning of the few words used. Cisco knew that their name was synonymous with routers (in fact they "owned" this word in technical networking arena), so they didn't need a slogan, tagline or descriptor that used it. Besides, they were growing at a rapid pace, so they would have had a problem with something like "The world leader in routers, switches, hubs, and other network controllers and infrastructure". Even though it was correct, not only is it long and changing, but it was boring. On the other hand, many companies pick this kind of tagline even though it only works for a few. If you own more than 50% of a given market, and that is all you do and all you intend to do, then OK, go on and use a tagline like "The world leader in ball bearings."

But don't use the tagline "The fiber optic technology company" as your tagline for Fitec simply because you are angry because someone else already (stupidly) named their company Fiber Optic Technology Inc. (probably also know as FOTI by the 2nd week of their existence). Stretch your imagination a bit more. Create a powerful tagline that all can memorize and enjoy and rally around. And here is the first rule of 'sloganeering':

If it is more than six words long, set it aside to use as a boiler plate sentence in your company backgrounder, web site, press releases or other positioning materials.

The second rule of making taglines, is that everyone should be proud enough to display it on their business cards, right there by

the company logo and their own name. Business cards are valuable branding tools, especially if most of your promotional work is done on a person-to-person basis. You can always show the boring stuff like street address, corporate website and fax number on the back of your business card. They aren't needed for first impressions as much as a good name, logo and tagline… and your own name and direct number to help validate the promise.

Another great hint for creating taglines is to think of a big billboard on a busy freeway, where you have managed to capture your entire advertising message in a lovely picture. After all, everyone knows a picture is worth 1000 words…or only 8 words at 40mph. So here you have this great expensive billboard with just a picture. All you have to decide is where to put the logo.

So you put the name Akamai (for a real example of a completely abstract name) right by the internet waves. And your ad agency copy writers are running around coming up with many boring ad headlines and trying to understand your very advanced technology, when all you want to project across is short and sweet and your company position: "Delivering a better internet".

Beautiful! And when all employees see the sign in the lobby each morning, and the tagline on their web home page, they know what they have to do each day – deliver on the promise of building a better Internet. So now it is much more than a tagline for marketing positioning. It is a rallying cry for all employees and vendors. And in due course, as has happened to Akamai, the name enters the lexicon of people in the industry. It takes on a whole new meaning, of promises, values, personality and tones, while the academics in the English department are still looking up in their dictionary to see what the word actually means. (Hint: Look in a Hawaiian dictionary).

Cautionary Note! In the above example, I used the billboard as an illustration. Very few of you should ever consider this kind of branding for a high tech company, unless your product and touch points really are invisible to many people who actually use your services.

There are far, far cheaper ways to send your message out – unless you really are targeting all consumers who drive along the freeways.

Process

Time to create your own tagline. Surprise! Those three to six words, take many words and a whole lot of polishing until they are just right - with the correct tone and inspiration. Often, when I see the Apple words "Think Different" I wonder how many words and taglines ended up on the floor before this was selected. It takes some time and effort, but it is not as tough a process as a name. For one thing, the legal checking on taglines is much easier and less important. Secondly, the tagline can be used elsewhere, must be written in good, clear English (or your native country language) and can evolve and change later if need be.

But once again the process starts with a pile of suggestions thrown onto the table. This is a good time to allow your marketing copywriters to exercise their pencils, even if they were not good at coined words.

Here is a basic outline that works well:

1. Provide 5 or 6 good writers and communicators all the materials used to create your name, brand values and personality, as well as any other firmed up goals and objectives, including elevator pitches and press boiler plate materials.
2. Ask each one to come up with 50 taglines in under 3 days (creative pressure is excellent!).
3. Collect and tabulate all submissions in a spreadsheet and have 2 or 3 key marketing people do a quick edit (with an outside facilitator if at all possible for sanity and duplication checks) to boil this total list down to just 100 taglines.
4. In the next management meeting, have all managers mark their 10 to 20 possible taglines they like or want to propose for further discussion.
5. Any tagline with more than one vote automatically goes forward to the next round. Have the proponent say what he/she saw in

     any tagline that only got one vote, and see if they want to keep it on the table.

6. Adjourn the meeting while someone competent checks all taglines on internet and other sources, to see if they are used elsewhere. Plus, check registered and common law trademarks. If need be, the project manager could propose some tweaks or variations on the taglines at this time.

7. At the next management meeting, provide a summary of the checked results, and facilitate a group decision on final tagline. If one leader does not emerge, OK. You may need to do some more work, or you may need to sleep on the three top runners, and try them in different contexts. At least they should be sounded aloud with the company name and written next to the name and logo. Note: None of this is valid if the CEO is not involved.

8. Finalize exact statement and grammatical usage. Tighten up words if possible. Shorter is always better. Inform in-house legal team of the results – they may want to even file for trademark registration. Use it properly, accurately and consistently as soon as possible. Add it to your corporate branding online treasure trove too.

The problem with the process and procedures in the creative field is that they only work when players at the meetings are empowered and brave enough to speak their minds. Especially those who intrinsically "get marketing", whatever their rank in the company. But make sure they have been on board long enough to really know personally some of your key customers.

The most common failure I have seen in these meetings in larger companies is that there are too many attendees. And then everything can easily drop to the lowest common denominator, just so no one is offended and at least something was achieved in the right timeframe. As a result, I think the ideal size of such groups is less than ten people in a large corporation. In small startups, the opposite happens. Everyone has an opinion – even the junior whose total market experience is clouded by teenage fashion marketing or recent online exploits.

If the process is not working, you cannot force it. Write up the top 5 taglines on a big sign, and leave them on the wall for a week in the cafeteria. Study the resulting graffiti carefully – the answer will emerge.

What about product or division taglines rather than company ones? Of course - Yes! In particular, if you are a division manager you are in effect running your own business. Stand out from the competing divisions. Tell all your division employees what their rallying cry is, and show your distinct positioning to other divisions competing for corporate mind share and resources. Of course, make sure your taglines and slogans are not at odds with the corporate messaging and direction or your customers will surely feel the disconnection long before you do!

Finally, use the tagline on all your business cards, email messages, web sites, stationery, packaging, documentation, collateral and much of your signage. Create a launch plan to announce the tagline and direction to all your employees, distributors, press, analysts, vendors and customers. Use it as a rallying cry for new prospect promotions and themes, but do not confuse it with an advertising headline. It is your 3 second elevator pitch for those times when you don't even have 10 seconds.

7. BRAND TOUCH POINTS

Brand touch points are all the points where you, your products, your services or your messages touch a prospect or customer. A very simple concept…Easily elucidated and discovered, yet seldom used as a branding and marketing guide. The big exception was the advertising call from AT&T in years gone by when they used the great slogan: Reach out and touch someone. This is a powerful basic concept for all outbound marketing programs, as well as branding programs. People react to touch in so many different ways. But if you don't touch them, at least verbally, don't expect them to embrace you as easily. Maybe even keep the graphic from the cover of this book handy so that each day you can ask who did we touch today.

No one has all the resources they would like in marketing. Everything is a balance of resources, money, time and ROI (Return on Investment). So shouldn't you direct most of your time and effort into the places where you touch the world the most? Yes, yes, you say.

But do you? Or do you do your marketing and messaging based on what you know, or what worked once before for you, or what gives you most exposure with the boss, or what is more fun, or as a knee jerk reaction to the loud salesman, or as a repartee to the competitor's campaign, or the one that will get you to travel to the right town or seminar?

Or even worse, what your new creative agency thinks is cool because they are keen to show off their new design tools and skills, especially where it makes them the most money? Even though they had never heard of you last month and still haven't analyzed where and at what level and frequency prospects can be touched by you. And they are certainly persona non grata in the product design department.

PROCESS

Time to cut to the chase. See Figure 7-1 below.

Touch Points	Avg. Touch Time / Point	Touch Times / Year	Total Touch Minutes / Year

Figure 7 –1

Marketing can complete this form probably by themselves, but for management to believe it, they need to be involved. So in column one, write down in any order, all the places where you "touch" your prospects and customers. Include indirect channels and partners too. Some obvious examples are sales calls, direct mail, tradeshows, and PR stories, networking events, retail showrooms. But there are many more. Use a bigger piece of paper if need be…or better still, a very big whiteboard in the conference room. And document it all in a spreadsheet.

Now in column two, agree on the average Touch Time per point. Are phone sales calls really 20 minutes long each? How long are

cold calls? And how long does your prospect really look at your brochure, your website and spend in your trade show booth? Do they use your product daily? Great…for how long do they see and know your name while they are using it? How long did they spend looking at your lobby when they visit vs. the time they saw your banner at the techy conference or the billboard coming in from the airport?

Complete this Time column then stop and do a sanity check. Do they really spend longer reading your brochure than talking to tech support? Does your salesman really spend longer with them on each call than your field application engineer? Do they really spend longer actively viewing your trade show booth than they spend in an educational seminar? Do they really spend more time with your accounting department than they do with your dealer?

Now go back and complete column three, which says how many times a year you touch your customers for each event you timed in column two. For example, if you put down 8 hours for an educational course, how many course days per year? If you put down 15 minutes for a phone call, how many per year? 3 hours at the booth? Fine, but probably only once a year. And reading that brochure? 45 minutes? Maybe. But how many times a year? Compare and contrast with website access. Maybe only 5 minutes, but maybe 30 times a year.

So you can multiply every touch time by number of occurrences per year, to get total event touch minutes per year. In a future chapter we will see how to use all this fairly accurate data (even though it was collected without the services of an expert market research firm) to plan all your brand messaging efforts in times of focus points. But for now, I think you can see where it is going.

Perhaps you are already asking yourself why only the tradeshow marketing guys get fancy company polo shirts, and not the support or education departments. And if you touch the customer with hundreds of email messages a year from the company, why isn't there a standard company signature line for all employees that promotes your brand and position?

This is also a great exercise to see why you probably don't have to run billboard advertising. Unlike Pepsi, for example, you touch your customers and prospects every day. But unless you seek out the product, Pepsi can only touch you with expensive advertising as they are not going to meet you on the phone, on the internet, on a support call, in a classroom, at a trade show, in the trade press, or even in the store unless you really notice their vending display or merchandising materials. But they can catch your eye with packaging and point of purchase display materials, just like you if you sell off the retail shelf at Fry's, CompUSA or Office Depot.

Checkpoint: Did you include accounting, service, investors, management, receptionists and delivery people in touch events?

The more times I have completed an exercise like this with clients, the more I have avowed that next time I do a consistent branding and marketing campaign, I will probably start in the service and support departments!

8. BRANDING THROUGH PRODUCT DESIGN

I can just hear you engineering types saying, "Wow…at last he gets around to something real and tangible that we can do and know how to do!" Well yes, if your company has agreed on its brand values, personality and image. If it knows where it will mostly touch the customers. And if you make tangible products.

For those of you in the services industry, there are many ways to create products as well, so hang in there in this chapter. Later we will discuss service branding in more detail – and then I hope the hard product people will listen in, especially if they ever have to handle support and service issues.

Many people say branding is much easier when you make products, as you have somewhere prominent to put your label or logo! True, but it is so much more than that.

If you had an engineering and design team that had worked together for years, and you split them down the middle, and asked them to each design the same device, but gave them very different brand characteristics, would the finished products look similar? Probably not! And one might just look more like it belongs in your company than the other one! Even if you have not done any brand design or study. Why? Because your company and implicit branding comes through. However, this is a very difficult problem for startups, unless some 'brand meister' dominates, or the team knows each other very well and has bonded fast.

Way back when I was an official beta tester for Olivetti's PC that was made for them by AT&T at the time. This was one of their first forays into the PC arena. Being a propeller head at the time, I was fascinated by its high-resolution graphics (monochrome!), large amount of memory and all those fancy connectors on the back. It looked kind of chunky and drab, but that never really dawned on me

until the second week when my wife called me for dinner by yelling "Stop playing with Big Ugly and come and eat!"

Well, just like that old mutt that followed you home one day, Big Ugly and I became affectionately connected until he was no longer repairable and upgradeable. By then absolutely no one wanted 'him' as the product line had been a resounding flop.

So here is Athol's first rule of product branding:

Ugly never sells.

It might work great. Run fast. Cost little. But long term, ugly never makes for a decent product lifetime. There are a few military and industrial exceptions to this rule, but I think that even people in the military or on the factory floor actually become accustomed to, and start liking, things that look the way they are used to seeing things in military or industrial designed packaging.

Over the years, Tektronics has been a great technology leader and ventured into many different product families. They have sold many, many oscilloscopes that are only used behind closed doors in engineering labs. But they always had professional cases and coverings and a little leather (well pseudo leather) pouch for the handy reference guide. Larger models had a matching cart that positioned it just so at the right angle for you, and even had a shelf for the detailed manuals you might need. And all of this was always in their own special blue color. Not mundane shades of gray or beige or black! Did this physical design cost them a bit more? Anyway, who said they had to provide a pouch and a shelf?

But as competitors tried to enter their market, they not only had to compete on technical merit and price, they also had to compete against the power of the Tektronics brand name and the look and design and service level they had established. Buyers always seemed to find a way to persuade their purchasing department to procure a Tektronics 'scope' - despite its usually higher price tag.

But these devices were mostly used by electrical engineers to analyze electrical circuits to design embedded electronics that most no one will ever see. They knew they would really only feel comfortable with a Tektronics scope, even though they couldn't enunciate that fact. And even if they could, they wouldn't have had the courage to tell purchasing they wanted it because of that reason.

Which leads us to Athol's second rule of brighter branding for propeller heads:

Engineers and scientists are people too.

A lady I once met had been an IBM engineer for many years, before moving up to run and later manage a major educational program for them. But when she first said hello to me, I could feel she was still in shock at being offered 'early retirement'. And for those of you who have never worked for a big company for a long time, where you are completely indoctrinated in, immersed in, and branded by the company culture, it is normal to be in shock for a while when your cocoon is suddenly split asunder one day.

Humans are creatures of habit and don't all like sudden changes, new designs, strange environments, etc. Anyway, back to my lady friend who was trying to make the best of it. Being a propeller head, she was analyzing the technical and financial merits of accepting IBM's offer of a personal PC at a very special price as part of her separation package.

Now I knew what she was talking about as she went through a litany of price points and features, but listening between the lines I could sense some real discomfort. I didn't know what her real problem was, though certainly it didn't seem to be the money. Even a psychologist may not have got her to personally discover the problem for a long time. So I suggested she used the old mantra of purchasing agents everywhere 'When in doubt, shop about.'

She was up against a deadline to take the deal or loose it, so I told her to just call Dell and Gateway and some other direct suppliers,

and at least get a quick quote from them. But talk to a human and get a written proposal faxed over right away, don't just search online.

Little did I know I was using good psychology. Those human voices and written quotes not only gave her technical and financial decision making ability, it also gave her personal reassurance that people were prepared to listen to her and hear her needs, even if IBM didn't need her services any more.

Six months later, she was still out of work, but everyone could see she was clearly relaxed, happy, and cheerfully charging down a new career path. Being curious, I just had to ask her if she ever bought a PC at all.

She replied: "Oh I love my Gateway. I go upstairs and hug it everyday!" Once again, feeling comfortable was more important than saving those last few dollars. And it is from this kind of experience of the promise that such brand loyalty is created.

But how did Gateway do their branding? With cow patterns! And black and white no less. Wow! If you try to analyze it today you may be asking if their original target market was farmers. Only consumers you say. Nonsense. In companies all across the country smiles break out when you go pick up your package from the receiving department and carry it through the corporate cubicle labyrinth… as people see you didn't get just another brown box of computer stuff… you got a white box with Hereford patterns on it. Your colleagues are mooing in delight. Guess who they will at least consider next time they need a good computer or peripheral?

[Ed: Since this was originally written Gateway has gone to their unintelligible generic keyhole logo look. Please join us in mourning the passing of the cows.]

OK, so you sell even more technical products to more technical audiences. You sell advanced embedded technology to help telecommunications. Industry analysts have praised your technology when they first heard of it, and since then you have quietly been making

as many presentations as you can. But your salespeople find it is hard capturing an audience with the right design engineers, because they don't know enough about your company, its reputation or your products. And for now you only have this one niche product. Besides which they already have purchasing channels established with Lucent, Cisco, Motorola and Nortel.

Remember Rule 2: Engineers are people too. They act like people and go with the familiar. They say they want the latest technical solutions, but what they really want is peace of mind. They say it doesn't matter what it looks like as long as it does the job, but they like that cool shape of the competitor's plastic cover. They want to do their own job and not waste time explaining to management why they need to bring on a new supplier no one has ever heard of. Why should they have to come up with boring technical justifications when reality is the solution just looks good and feels right?

This brings us to the third rule of brighter product branding:

Engineers are not artists any more than artists are engineers.

It really does take someone with visual artistic design skills to create a suitable look and feel, user interface, or industrial design that appeals to human emotions and reflects your company (and brand personality) properly (ideally matches some of your brand values too). Some may argue, of course they are different. Using different sides of the brain or whatever. Or different genes you were born with. Probably.

But even if we start out the same, you can't be a great engineer unless you have put considerable days of your life into getting there. Which means you didn't have much time to put into honing your visual and intuitive design skills. And vice versa for artists too. They just haven't spent enough of their life studying engineering. (There are a few exceptions to this rule, but all six of them are living on a remote mountain top.)

Unfortunately, we are all human beings. We only like to be told what we are good at - not what we don't know. So until the end of time, engineers will try to design things in a vacuum and artists will have their opinions on what should go on inside. Wait! There is another group on the payroll. One who knows a little engineering and a little visual design, even if they can't do either.

Please bring on the product marketing people. They need to be advocates for the customers. They should have done their competitive and marketplace homework. They had better know the company's goals and values. Now if they can just quietly introduce the visual design artists to the engineers by chairing a roundtable discussion, that facilitates everyone's needs and satisfies their wishes, they can make you a really great product.

No one does it more effectively than Apple! To the point at which they have been accused of just selling colored plastic and not technology! Aren't you envious?

Marketing can work closely with (maybe even contract) industrial design engineers to develop the outside packaging and cases of the products. Marketing can act as gofer and run back and forth to test early prototypes on prospects as the program progresses. This will allow you time to judge if the team's intuition, designs and technical features are coalescing into a really powerful solution that will have people jumping through hoops to buy.

So we have reached Rule four:

Product managers need to be the customer and brand advocates.

Notice - this rule does not say project managers. By the same token, product managers should not be spending most of their time internally being pseudo project managers. This is a malady in some companies. Especially those that have taken engineers and called them product managers just to satisfy ISO requirements. What a shame! Those same product managers could be out and about with

real customers, real salespeople and real channel partners, studying real competitors and doing real usability and viable research.

Notice even further, this rule does not say sales should be the customers' advocates. Yes, they often are because someone has to. Sometimes there is no one else. But sales all have a narrow viewpoint, since they can only visit and see customers in their local territory. Their charter in life is not to help design products and build brands for next year. Their charter is to ride the magic product and brand carpet already created to financial success this quarter. Their input, however, is very valid. So too is that from service and support and anyone else touching the customer regularly. Marketing, after spending time with all these departments should be aggregating all this data. Then they can make valid product plans and do it in the light of final price and positioning goals.

For years marketeers have known that one of the benefits of strong brands is that it gives buyers confidence to spend their money. Merrin Research, which tracks technical purchases through retail channels, long ago did a study that proved the average buyer walking into a computer superstore, with a specific product or name in mind, was quite likely to switch to a name brand product instead if it was prominently displayed nearby. You've probably done the same thing yourself. You really weren't going to spend $55 on that home network hub, but you were really worried about support and had never heard of the company making the $19.95 version. Besides which, that cheap one didn't have a nice box showing a happy user on it and full contact information.

So you went ahead and bought the new USB hub for a grand total of $75, compared to the name brand one for $49.99. All because one was on display out of the box, and you could touch, feel it and turn it over. You could see the little wires and connectors inside, even though you really don't know what they do. Sure looks neat too! You know your kids will think its cool and help to justify the expense of a new toy to your spouse. (Hopefully!) You in turn will not be able to wait to tell all your friends back in the office or down at baseball practice. And a new brand will be coming to life.

If you were the financial controller for the companies that made these products in the examples alluded to above, how happy would you be to see these buying patterns? Even if the higher ticket items went over budget and drove you nuts in the development phase!

So one of the age-old benefits of branding is very appropriate for modern technology branding, giving us Rule Five:

Buyers want the comfort & confidence of a brand to spend their money.

Just in case anyone has forgotten Rule One in the rush to create confidence in his or her next great technology breakthrough. All people absorb product data for their brain with their eyes (most data), their ears (far less data) and with their fingers (not much data, but it carries the most weight). Smell is very important too for some products. So your product designs have to appeal to the senses.

How much time did you spend in engineering school learning about aesthetics and appealing to the senses? Probably not much, unless you took some classes over at the architecture faculty. Probably lots and lots if you studied art and graphics design and psychology. Its not intuitive anymore than designing circuit boards is. Professional work comes from professional people trained in their field. You want a buyer's money. They want their products to feel right.

Like all fields, there are specialists in industrial design, packaging and of course the graphics arts. People who have studied human interaction, but can also talk to engineers about the electrical, heating and mechanical needs. You don't need them all the time, but marketing can bring them in as needed, and match them with research from visual branding studies. Cheskin Research, for one, has tons of data from different studies on how people react to different graphics and packaging issues (product and box). And they don't just dump a pile of statistics in your lap. They know you are people too…. So results are presented graphically.

Just think where Apple computers would be without their industrial design teams. Steve Jobs called Frog Design in so much to help with the original Mac industrial designs that Frog finally opened a Silicon Valley location, but I bet their work is still influenced by their German headquarters too.

Finally, for all executives or would be executives reading this book, you already known your most important personal attribute is an ability to listen. Listen to all these inputs from engineering and marketing and design consultants and customers, even if you are very small. Remind them of your brand values and brand personality. By reaching out and touching them at the design phase, you can steer your products so they will smoothly and elegantly touch the prospects on the sales side and the customers thereafter. A comfortable customer may still have problems and worries about doing his own job with your tools and products, but his demeanor will be friendly and supportive as he calls the support lines.

When I do my taxes with TurboTax I always smile when I see their soft 3D shaped buttons, and friendly helpful and support prompts. They didn't have to take the trouble to make those buttons. Square flat black and white buttons would still allow me to navigate around and type in my shaky numbers. The program would still add up correctly and keep Uncle Sam happy…and print all those bland detailed forms the government is using to reduce paperwork!

But Intuit software uses consumer focus groups all the time, and cares a lot about user interfaces. It is part of the company mantra – driven in a large part by the founder Scott who is a market researcher and not engineer by background. Which results in products driven by customer needs and likes, and not by engineering's opinions based on guesses at least three cubicles down. This kind of caring and interface research is not free. All software startups should study Intuit's programs first as a minimum before designing interfaces. You too might successfully defend and build your market share despite a full frontal attack from the mighty Microsoft juggernaut.

Finally, have you ever noticed you can sit at a traffic light half asleep and talk on the phone, when you instinctively know when a BMW, or Jaguar, or Mercedes, or Jeep, or even a VW crossed in front of your eyes. Despite the fact that you never actually consciously saw a logo or name. Whatever the year or model, for a given manufacturer they all come from their own design school. In fact, the distinctive grill designs of BMW and Jeep are registered trademarks of their owners. Now tell me if the last car went by was an Acura or Toyota or Infinit or Nissan or Lexus or Oldsmobile when you were not paying close attention. Hmm… "one of those Japanese generics" you might say. So you are grouping them together in the mental bucket of generics – and this will affect your buying decision loyalty downstream – even if it is a quality generic bucket.

Well, what has this got to do with technology design? Go to a trade show and see all the workstations lined up. From across the hall, there is a distinct look and feel to a HP vs an IBM vs an Apple vs a Toshiba for example. And then there are the rest. You too can have a unique family product face. I realize you don't have the money of those big players. But if you care to distinguish yourself, you will find an independent designer who can give your whole product line a distinctive look – but you will have to be loyal and consistent to this in all designs to impress it on the minds of your customers.

Do your own visual brand survey even if you only exhibit at Super-Comm or Mobile World Congress, where row after row of vendors make black boxes that sit on racks in back computer rooms. Probably only 10 to 20% of the vendors have found a way to make their rack mount equipment and stand alone servers and other technologies in a box look just that little bit better dressed up.

Hint: It is probably in the trade show booths where all the visual displays and workers look like they are one strong customer centric brand, even if they are in a little 10x10 booth.

And if all else fails, a professional 3 dimensional nameplate can go a long way even on plain sheet metal!

Footnote: If you are feeling stale and jaded in this product design area, go spend your lunch hour in a BOSE store.

9. THE COMPLETE PRODUCT

In the helter-skelter world of high tech, there is always pressure to perform fast. And in this rush to technology leadership, many companies cut corners and don't finish products properly before launching them on unsuspecting early adopters. From management's point of view this fact is often confessed too. But at the same time justified by the claim they must do so in order to create revenue flow to get the bankers and financiers off their backs.

This is where reality intrudes unfortunately, especially if the technology took a lot longer and more money than expected to develop fully – which needless to say is a very common occurrence. But there is still no need to put out a half-baked product that compromises your brand. One that could cost you a lot of clients and money downstream. If you get off to a bad start, it is very hard to recover customer loyalty.

There is a solution.

Plan from the outset to make complete products. The name, the packaging, the service and support, the channels and partners should no more be a last minute afterthought than the choice of an embedded operating system is. They do take some time and effort, much more than they take money. Appoint a product manager early and empower him to deliver complete products to the marketplace. This is what the consumer giants have been doing for years. In those companies, a product manager is a very senior position – and often goes by the title brand manager instead.

When Bill Davidow was the marketing V.P. of Intel, he wrote Marketing High Technology. In this book he makes a statement we should all emboss on our desktop organizers:

Engineers make devices. Marketeers make products.

Yes, this came from Intel before they started their big public branding and Intel Inside campaigns. When they were growing in leaps and bounds and everyone was praising their technical superiority!

(Brands of course are made in the minds of the buyers, but you already know that – else go back and read chapters 1 and 2).

From the minute I first read this quote and heard it repeated a number of times, it struck home like a lightning bolt to the heart. When I was an engineer I thought I was making products – but now in hindsight I realize I was making devices. Sometimes I even cry for all the lost time I spent programming nights when smarter management would rather have stood back and looked at a bigger picture. Not to worry. I was young and energetic and the experience was good.

So that you are not confused as well, let me illustrate the difference between a device and a product with the help of some ideas from Prof. P. Kottler's Principles of Marketing.

Figure 9-1

In figure 9-1 you see a device. It has core functionality, specifica-

tions and features. It has a vague target audience in mind way off in the distance. Now look at Figure 9-2 after marketing has transformed it into a complete product.

It has tangible benefits. It has various price points and configuration options (with part numbers). It has product literature, documentation, packaging and a name. Every product from every startup should be able to get this far. Even if your product is service, training, insurance or some such financial offering. Up to this point, startups can compete with the big boys, except for the name that precedes the product name (shown in this diagram as a brand name, though you may choose only to do real branding at the corporate level).

Figure 9-2

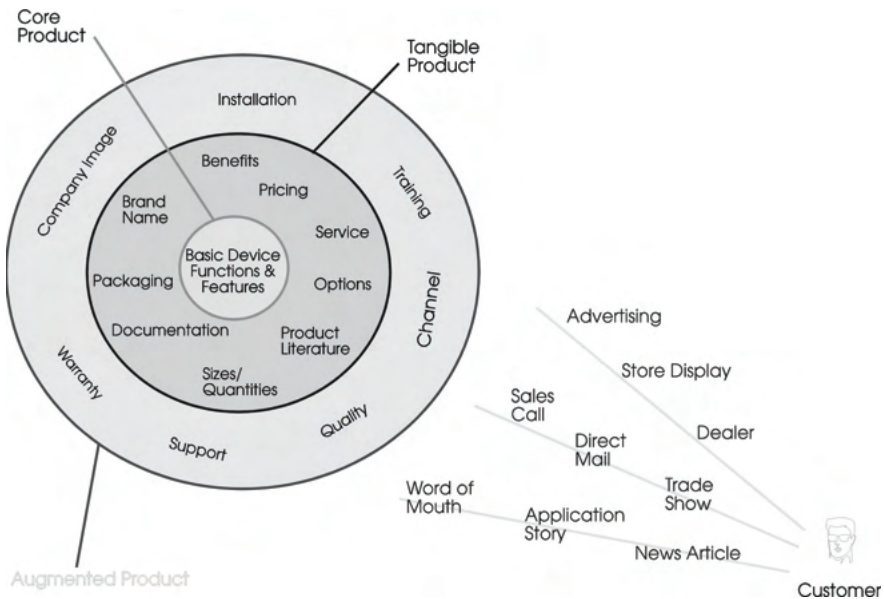However, customers buy more than just the product. Remember they buy the promise of an experience. Thus, you need to augment the product with a good company image, with installation and training support, with warranties and suitable distribution channels. All of these reflect on your brand and vice versa. This is the point where the established players have such an advantage. You invent a device

and your marketing team turns it into a product. But your name and reputation is unknown as a small player or startup, even if you have famous founders.

These intangibles are especially hard to earn quickly as a startup, which is why big established companies are so hard to compete with for customer mind share. But if H-P sticks their logo on the same sort of product – Boom! Instant credibility!. Instant quality assured!. Instant reputable channels of distribution! You might argue that in some cases this isn't true. Yes, but usually it is. H-P would rather not ship a product than put their name on an incomplete product offering and risk ruining their corporate brand. A brand name today that is probably alone worth 30% of the company's valuation.

In Sony or Coca Cola's case, this percentage is even higher. Sony just doesn't want millions of dollars from any low cost poorer quality product, and so will never put their name on such designs. But if you want good sound and don't care about cheaper packaging and support, you can go out and buy an AIWA boom box. If it sounds just like the more expensive Sony model don't be surprised. Sony owns 100% of AIWA. But which of these two companies is bigger? Which one is more likely to last forever, despite the large mass of poor people in the world who like music?

Notice also though, that a product is only really ready for market when the market accepts and echoes back these messages to the company. When all is said and done, the real proof is when they open their check books too. A complete product that produces a good brand experience, also has a clearly defined target prospect and customer base, which hears product messages through multiple marketing media, and can buy and see the product through various channels too.

So you might think you have a dilemma – customers want complete products. But you can't really make complete products until the customers have used and accepted them. Whatever you do internally, it needs to get to customers to get feedback. Luckily we are mostly all aware of the common practice of beta tests and early adopters. Cus-

tomers who will work with you on pre-release products so they can get access and have input, and you can have valid feedback and final design tweaks and learn a lot about what users think of the product. Perhaps get some early revenue too. Call it customer research if you want to. Its all good and well for both sides, prior to the big product launch and rollout.

Of course, the most powerful marketing medium in the world is Word of Mouth – and your brand name gives these message trans-mitters the verbal shorthand to pass your information along quickly. Same for Word of Mouse.

10. EMPLOYEE BRANDING

When you look at the chart of your brand values that you made and stuck on your cubicle wall (after working through Chapter 7 of this book), do you see how many of these touch points involve your own people or your distribution channel people? Now, are those people fully immersed in your brand? I don't mean you have to put everyone in cute uniforms like MacDonalds or UPS, but they do have to feel and act the part of your brand. And they need to all feel that way fast, once you decide on your brand values, image, name and logo because branding takes time, so the sooner you get started the better. Also, the sooner the employees embrace it, the more cohesive the implicit message of your brand promise as customers experience your product or company through your people.

On one big naming project I once worked on, only a top handful of executives, plus their lawyer, knew what the new name was going to be. In fact, while many had complained and wrestled with their old name heritage, which just did not work in the modern Internet space - many never even knew it was up for discussion. As an outsider, I was sworn to secrecy and also entrusted with the domain name protection until a carefully timed transition. We had to do this, as there were so many Internet propeller heads in the company and they would have known where to look for electronic footprints if they had suspected a name change was in the works.

Then one afternoon they had an all hands meeting on both coasts. Most thought it was just for financial review and update. Yes, it was! But then, all employees were told of the new name and identity. And more importantly, all of them were presented with a coffee cup with the new name on it, along with their very own personal and correct new business cards! When they went back on-line, their new look website already had a few pages up! It was all reinforced, I am sure, when employees read the positive few words in the Wall Street Journal the next morning. For those of you that don't understand PR, you don't suddenly have stories like this appearing in the most

influential paper in the country accidentally on the right day, but that is another story. (Recommended reading: Guerilla Publicity by Levinson, Frishman and Lublin.)

On a similar note, Steve Jobs at Apple is a master at big new product launches, all centered around one day and event with all insiders sworn to secrecy at the risk of loosing their jobs for leaking any details!

This I call the big bang approach to new company or product branding. Some people call it the cold shower approach – well maybe. Just like a cold shower is effective at waking you up in the morning, so too is a quick cutover effective in awakening a new brand and image. Besides, it is much cheaper, since it minimizes lost time while every one debates change, wondering when their cards will come, and how should they answer their phone. What will their email be like, and how will the Website look, and what they don't like or do like? Whatever name and identity you pick for your company or product line, some will not like it. In fact, at first, many may not like it since people are inherently lazy at learning new vocabulary – and your new name is probably a new word if you are seeking the best trademark protection.

(Aside: Don't scare the customers and prospects with this quick change, at least use statements like "formerly called…" on the bills and important letters. And let them all know directly and quickly.)

One other example like this was the day Intel announced their first foray into naming rather than numbering their processor chips. 'Techies' were so affectionately attached to 386, 486, etc., it was hard for many of them to believe the judge had actually said Intel does not own these numbers. Especially when Boeing could own 727, 747, etc. The fact that Boeing bothered to register the numbers and protected them properly from the get-go was beside the point. Anyway, one day Intel calls a press conference. And being Intel on a hot streak, all the worlds' press show up. (Don't expect this at your little company when your lawyers tell you to change the product line name).

Then Intel calmly announces that after all the 2000+ names submitted by employees, and the efforts of two top naming agencies, and review by all their lawyers, the new name will be Pentium. "What's that?"- Was the cry! Only 24 hours later it was part of the English language. To give Intel great credit, while none of their own employees won the competition with a direct hit, two runner ups were awarded the prizes anyway and got their trips to Hawaii. And even more important to Intel's internal branding efforts, all employees knew the winners and knew they got their trips. These little things make people feel good about their company and their brand. In rapid succession, many Intel employees had Pentium Division or similar mentions somewhere on their cards.

A few more words need to be said about the importance of business cards before we move on to other employee branding tactics. Perhaps we should make it a more definitive statement even:

Good business cards are VERY important to employee branding

You act and think like, and believe in the person who is personified on that little card in your wallet. Especially if you are in management, sales, support or marketing. Whether it be in a business meeting, on the airplane, on the golf course or at your little junior's soccer game, people identify and are identified strongly by who they work for and what that company does. Sometimes ever more than who they are themselves! Haven't you ever heard suggestions like "Call that guy who works in purchasing that we met at … sounds like they are a good outfit."

I heard a venture capitalist once say that business cards do not matter, it is just a white piece of paper to record your name and phone number. Sure – if you have an awful lot of money in your pocket and people are beating doors down to reach you – and you are never going to be a well-known product or services company and you never have to sell.

For the rest of us, notice how lost we feel without nice colorful cards

to hand out to strangers in the coffee shop, or relatives from out of town. This is part of the anxiety of being out of work. We have no association to complete our life. Yes, we belong to the racquetball club or the local rotaries or temple group, but that costs us money. How we make a living defines us a lot more once you are a working adult. (People who are out of work, are strongly advised to make their own personal cards. Helps you feel a lot more like a professional. Plus, you can use them afterwards for personal non-work relationships).

So as a brand manager, you need to satisfy this desire. If only all branding was this easy and cheap. Good business cards are less than $100 per employee. Small change compared to the payoff and the salary you are paying that person to use them. I seriously tell employees I will make them pay this cost too if they don't bring plenty of cards to any trade show, dinner or public event!. And for those of you who think this is only for big companies, please see Chapter 19.

A few paragraphs back did you notice how we agreed that a business card imparts three key pieces of information:

- Who you are
- Who you work for
- What that company does

This is not like the old days when business cards provided an address so I could write you a letter or telex or even more exciting a fax! Do you realize that business cards work much better when at a glance a recipient of one can identify these three criteria? And after that, probably all they need at the initial meeting is your direct phone number and email address. Consider putting all the other nonsense on the back of the card if you feel like you must have it. For many 'techies', they are going to loose it anyway because they know they can look it up on your website at any time of the day or night.

Did you notice item 3 said, "What the company does"? Yes, your slogan can fit below the logo. Or a small diagram or bullet list on

the back of the card also does wonders to make sure everyone in the company or division has the same three second elevator pitch. Saves a lot of money in sending employees to company indoctrination programs or 'rah rah' sessions too. They join. They receive their own business cards. They identify immediately with the company image and positioning. They hand them out. They are asked what does this mean. Voila! They learn and present the pitch. And if they only talk to 10 people a year, and those 10 people only tell 10 people, etc., etc. Then the branding bees are at work pollinating your world. All because you took the time to treat them right from the start.

Now lets move on to the next fact about human personality and branding:

Employees are creatures of their environment

If you have delivery people or uniformed service people then it is obvious. You can control your brand right down to the buttons on their jackets. But what about the typical high tech company?

Start with your customer service department. Does it look and feel like your brand? I've told many a group that the next time I am VP Marketing or Branding, I am going to start here. Supply them all with company shirts, hats, coffee cups, pens, mouse pads and posters. Right after they all are handed their own personal business cards that I'll encourage them to include with any shipment or letter. After all, they are in reality often the face of your brand.

Let's take a minute to look at an interesting example from that staple sustenance company for late night workers everywhere. Ok, so you don't know? Bet you can taste Taco Bell, KFC or Pizza Hut as soon as I mention them. They all have the same parent and the same MIS support teams. They all have similar mission-critical cash register and telecommunications needs running off the same platforms, and none of them have technology support people in any of their thousands of outlets. From an MIS point of view, it makes little or no difference whether they are selling tacos or chicken wings or pizza

slices.

But if you visit their technology support centers, one support room feels like Taco Bell. Purple bells, hats, banners, and Mexican themes. The next support room has red and white tablecloths, pizza posters, and round table décor everywhere. And, of course, the third support area looks like a welcome party for the Colonel himself. Good employee immersion! Great empathy entwined with their business and the reality of being at the other end of serving customers.

From these simple lessons I hope you can extrapolate that you need to brand the accounting department too (look at Fedex paperwork for superb examples – they know accountants control their destiny), as well as all other aspects of the company and not just the front lobby. Yes, you have a job to get done and you really need to devote all your resources to designing that new network switch, processor chip, embedded software or consumer remedy. The question is how hard will the sales and marketing challenge be when you go to market?

> Notice how the staff at Southwest Airlines dress? Notice how friendly and energetic they are? Wouldn't you be in a better mood if you had to run around all day and the company uniform was sneakers and shorts?
>
> And what if the people surrounding you were chosen for their personality skills as opposed to their computer terminal or baggage handling experience? It's not just about getting from A to B as cheaply as possible! It's about being treated right.

Will they find the red carpet welcome awaits them or will they have to jump through walls? Isn't it worth empowering someone to be the part time brand manager and letting them slowly apply this throughout the company? Heck, open a company product store and the employees will brand themselves and their families. Give the sales staff special discount coupons for prospects, customers and partners and let everyone share in sewing the seeds of recognition.

Of course, the front line on the charge to brand creation is staffed by your management and sales forces. Both your own direct sales, as well as your distributors, dealers, partners, reps, etc. Are they all putting out a consistent corporate message that portrays your com-

pany image correctly? Or is the salesman in Houston using a different set of home made presentation materials from his counterpart in Chicago and from that independent rep in Boston? After all, left to his or her own devices, they all have different tastes and color ideas, not to mention skill sets in developing materials.

What if corporate marketing just gave them a standard template to work from? What if the corporate standard pitch was in this format and provided as a sample to see how it is implemented? What if it was posted on the website so they could all download it and never complain they never got it, or the updates? What if they had to all present some part or information at the annual sales meeting, and their expense checks were held up for non-conformance?

A junior person in your graphics design department can usually make a better presentation template than any senior salesperson, and in one-third of the time. Yes, it takes more time to develop the message and the words, so you want this done right first time, by marketing people who can write succinctly and clearly. These are simply the facts of life and the nature of the positions. Allow the salesmen to do what they do best. Go out and sell and spread all your marketing messages around. Not sit around and make poor quality presentations, diagrams or whatever. But do let them customize some pages – prospects are awfully impressed when they see their name and logo in color early on. And since it is shown on one of your branded pages, this is a subtle first association of the two brands together.

In this chapter we have taken a very simple, but effective, approach to the start of employee branding. I can feel you are chomping at the bit to get back to talking about products, competitive differentiation or marketing campaigns. Fine, there are complete books and workshops on this subject because it often takes people time to create and deliver on your brand promises and experiences. Visit every department of your company and makes sure it feels like one consistent experience.

P.S. Pity this isn't a requirement for an ISO audit … but you can choose to add it to the list.

11. BRINGING YOUR BRAND TO LIFE

So how do you bring your new brand to life? How do use it to lead the charge towards brand growth? Well, how did you announce your first child? Phone calls to all your friends, family and colleagues? Notices in the newspaper? Cards to the extended family mailing list? Baby pictures on your personal website and entries in the family tree album? Lots more pictures. Lots more pride. Talked about junior until everyone was sick of hearing about her – but none can now forget that you have a child called Samantha.

Except that when naming your child you have nine months to come up with a name, and duplicates are allowed! And years to promote the little 'treasure' until they grow up and leave the nest. More importantly, you did something. You took action. You (or Grandma) put the name on things other than the birth certificate. And nowadays, probably tweeted the world and pasted it all over Facebook.

Likewise, with bringing a new company name or product name to life. There are many personalities in a company. They can't all make the decision on the name. Your management team will be the first to carry the flag for the new company or product, so they need to be the only ones that are initially satisfied (plus, the lawyers of course).

Then you can role it out to the world – but please make sure that all employees hear it first. They are often your most important brand missionaries after all. Whatever it is, they have no choice, but to embrace and use it, gets it changed, or goes find another job. Unless it is really bad or rude, they will usually embrace it quickly and comfortably if they have a way to touch and feel it.

Let your marketing constituents know about it quickly too. All your vendors, service providers, customers and top prospects. You might not have the kind of clout of Intel or H-P, but you can and should do something. It's that age-old maxim expounded in The Search for Excellence: A Bias for Action.

Branding does not occur in a vacuum. Your brand will come to life in a field of competitors in a crowded and noisy public information space. What are you going to do to cut through the noise and clutter? If you have real dollars that means you have to return real results fast. Go for the big bang approach. Have a blow the roof off event that involves all known marcom tactics. But don't be stupid hiring your favorite rock band unless their price is competitive and they are prepared to work your new name into their act.

And consider first using your own premises for any party. Hey, you've already paid the rent, why not capitalize on it and save paying out for some boring hotel? Besides which, your location is always a great symbol of your brand. Even Microsoft used their own campus with tents (it was the Pacific NW after all) to launch Windows 95 in the world's biggest tech PR event ever.

Another reason to use your own place is that then forces a deadline on all the petty details to make sure they properly exhibit the new brand. A small non-profit account I once worked on used this to great effect, by inviting all their constituents to an evening barbecue in their parking lot. At the appropriate moment they had some mountain climbers roll the new sign down the face of the building, after guests had been playing word games trying to guess the new name. Boom. Instant effect! Low budget. Everyone's got it. Plus they had warm feelings and emotions about the new name and logo and direction, because it was presented to them in that way. In other words, they experienced it.

Not just a curt email saying the name was changed. The story even made the Mercury News. Not only was it invaluable exposure, but it also made all members feel it was the right thing to do. Months before everyone was happy with the merger only as long as the old name from his or her side of the house persisted. In the end, everyone changed and most people were happy.

Caution: Control your creative talent

In case it hasn't sunk in yet, this may be an appropriate place to

remind you to control all your creative people and creative agencies to make sure that they rigorously adhere to the brand image, values and personality your management team has endorsed.

When all concerned are planning or developing the launch of your brand, the work done in the previous sections should be prominently displayed with copies being available for all. Plus the "brand manager" shall have final review on all materials and events. Don't cheat either. If an agency shows you a great design with a cute little black and white skunk, don't break down and use it if your colors are green and yellow and a racing cheetah is more of an appropriate symbol of your brand personality.

But more importantly, make sure all agencies are developing a consistent look and feel, or else chart one of them to develop the look and feel and to then provide this as a template to all the others. This applies to the public relations folks too. After all, they are often the most important department in creating a non-consumer brand. And they don't do any graphics at all. But they do distribute it widely to all the influencers. They do create stories and do manage the process whereby writers and editors document the brand experiences. In fact, they are trying to activate the most powerful marketing channel of all: WOM – Word of Mouth. When a good brand experience is shared with a wide cadre of people from your target audience, then it follows that your brand grows into that same audience.

Extra Caution: Corporate Brand Positioning – not PR Positioning

In many companies, high tech in particular, the branding exercises and positioning suggested in this book have not historically been done at all. But often the communications professionals in public relations have realized that and so they have done their own "Strategic Communications Planning". Usually with the support of management, or at least the marketing department no less! They realize they need a position and target and message before they can approach the analysts and the press. And they have found that client's will pay them to develop this, since it is so logical.

However, there is one big problem with this approach. What to do about the rest of the company? Are the service department, the product develop and design departments, the accounting departments, the tech. pubs, accounting and creative departments, as well as the web designer, advertising agency, trade show folks all going to learn about it when they read it in the press? Or worse, make their own assumptions about what they deduce from the press? When they developed their products and services were they based on a different set of assumptions?

Strategic messaging and brand values and positions no more belong exclusively in PR (or even Marcom), than strategic corporate planning belongs in those departments. In fact, very few companies can do pure corporate branding and image exercises until they are large public companies. Most have to lead with their products and services to realize a decent return on their scarce branding and marketing dollars.

But this is fine too. Products and services give you vehicles by which to transmit your brand messages, as we have seen in Chapter 9 – The Complete Product and will see in Chapter 16 – Service Branding. So now all we have to do is be creative in looking for ways to ensure our prospects and customers have more brand experiences than our competitors. It takes different thinking more than it takes money, and so it deserves its own chapter right now!

12. CREATING BRAND EXPERIENCES

Since brands are promises of an experience, how can we create these experiences that may have to transcend physical space and traditional marketing? Most non-brand centric companies never do anything about this consciously of course and then the marketplace and their competitors' end up branding them in the minds of the users anyway. So you can do a brand survey on any company, and there will usually be some awareness. But will it have the same brand values and personality you are trying to achieve? Probably not. Besides, what awareness and positioning does exist, will have taken longer to develop than a company that conscientiously tries to engage their clients in positive experiences.

One of the hot new brands in the USA and Europe that we are all familiar with is Starbucks. People no longer go out for coffee; they go out for their Starbucks - an individual experience! What makes this coffee so different from the one in a regular deli? Sure, you can argue it's a better quality. But you weren't complaining before. And you probably had your own favorite coffee vendor anyway – maybe even from the sidewalk cart. Only cost a $1.50 too.

> Be careful when reading Brand Week magazine's older annual brand surveys. They did not rate Starbucks in the top 2000 brands in the country! This is because Brand Week's surveys are designed to serve the advertising community – despite their own title and sister publication called Ad-Week. And Starbucks is not one of the top 2000 advertisers in the country!
>
> But in proper brand surveys like that now done annually by Interbrand and Business Week, companies like Starbucks do rate highly, along with the new technology brands like Google, eBay, AOL, Intel, Microsoft, etc.

Yet, now you happily pay double that at Starbucks…to nourish your same body with its warm caffeine fix. Why? To be fashionable, like your colleagues? Maybe partly…but we saw you duck in there when no one else was around. We also saw you using their lobby as a network meeting place.

And more interestingly, until they moved into the general retail stores with products in your supermarket, Starbucks never advertised! Wow. But did they create a great experience? Unbelievably so! Were they first to market? Definitely not – in fact the US was way behind Europe in this lifestyle. Does their brand say coffee directly? Not that I can see in the word Starbucks? Did they brand coffee? Yes. Is it a consistently positive experience from location to location? Amazingly so, in large part because employee branding is one of their strong traits.

Do they educate and inform over and above the basics, needed to order a cup of coffee? Have you seen their newsletters, pamphlets, packaging, website, store signage? Has it all been done with subtlety and taste? You be the judge. Can you recognize (even feel without looking), a Starbucks location when you walk down the street or through an airport, even before you smell the aroma? How do they do it - especially as they do not control the architecture of their locations?

Well, a lot of this is called merchandising. Unfortunately scientific and technology products don't have many channels to create these experiences. But we do have many other possible avenues by which we can reach out and touch our customers, partners, press and distributors. Many of which we can do on an almost daily basis because users embrace our products daily, talk to our staff daily, logon to our website daily, and look at the beanie on their desk daily. Once again, that is the easy part. How do we create positive technology experiences?

Perhaps a few examples are in order:

- When you surf over to Amazon.com notice how comforting it is to find they remembered you and even have some suggestions perhaps of books that might be of interest to you. And don't they ever make the checkout experience magic? If you want to comment on a book, notice how they let you say good and bad things, and read what others have said.
- In a hurry to find something on the web, when all you want

to do is enter your search and say go? I can see you now typing Google.com. A clean, elegant, simple, experience. Prefer to dig around in categories today and get some pointers? Then you are probably headed to Yahoo. Frustrated with all the consumer and public nonsense that is mixed in there when you are only business centric? You are probably headed to Business.com or similar. Need a guide? Why not Bing? Different experiences for different people. Or the same people on different days. Yet basically they all do the same thing.

- Trying to get your taxes done? Wrestling with which form to fill in and whether you have to file an associated detail form? Wondering what the bottom line will be if you do bother to do the paperwork on that charity donation? Struggling to understand dividend option tax implications? Wouldn't a brief human tutorial be nice? Sure you could buy some books and read and search and calculate and recalculate and scratch on all those forms the government provides under the paperwork reduction act. Or you could sit down and entertain yourself with TurboTax. Why does a tax program have to have soft rounded buttons and gentle color schemes? Why does it have to have informative neat little messages, data points and even video scenarios? After all, you only have to use it once a year…to fill in boring forms. Needless to say, this experience is so strong that TurboTax is now very dominant in its marketplace.

- For years, consumer companies have put staff at the corner aisles, in the parking lots, in the sports stadiums and many other places, giving away free samples. But when Netscape first gave away free browsers, everyone questioned their sanity. How do you make money giving away a product? But users loved it and drove the company to a very successful IPO, takeover and competitive counter attack. Well, it is called the taste test, and there are many other ways to implement it. Of course, the taste and experience have to be real or don't bother. Netscape's browser worked. And worked. And greatly simplified life on the net.

- Looking to fly somewhere and save some time and money? OK – you can search online at Travelocity or Expedia or Orbitz, or at any of the major airlines own sites. One of these (I forget which) even advertises you can change the number of travelers

without using the back button – but that is not enough of an experience for this traveler. After all, I can surf over to IflySWA. com and just point and click at my source and destination points, and then see what fares and flights are available immediately on one screen. Voila! A few clicks and off I go to try their on the ground and in the air experience.

- Want to experience what it is like inside an Intel fab? You can't. But you can pretend and have fun and interact with people in "bunny suits" at major trade shows. Maybe even try one on yourself.
- Thinking of what water filter or purifier to buy? Unsure of any brand names except that you heard the radio talking about coming out and helping clean our beaches and Brita would provide you with the trash bags and a drink. (And many others would help make it a fun day, as they loved the free media attention too.) Now which one do you feel good about?
- Which charity is best known for getting the community to help the community build low-income housing? Every year, Habitats for Humanities are masters at PR to get famous figures to try to swing a hammer.

A few chapters ago I pointed out, that engineers and scientists were people too. They might not normally all be gregarious and outgoing, but they are humans and so most of them have a natural need to interact. This is great for you, if you can find ways for them to interact and experience your company. Over and above the experiences they are going to have with the sales team and support teams, both of which are very, very important, what else can we do to create positive experiences?

Here are some ideas to work from, but don't be shy about creating your own interactions:

-     Live demos at tradeshows
-     Open house at your facility
-     Open house tour to your regional offices
-     Manufacturer demo days with your dealers
-     Extensive focus groups to thank and reward clients

- Hosting user group meetings
- Live demos at scientific and technical conferences
- Test drive facilities at shows or conferences
- Mini mockups as promotional giveaways
- Competitions that require using your product – with the press as judges
- Public donations to good and visible causes
- Sponsorship of technical shootouts
- Interactive video on YouTube or website with prizes
- Annual popup calendar in shape of your product
- Free sample supplies on dates you expect client to need more
- Company picnic (to which customers are invited)
- Full test drive booth in lobby of all your offices
- Rental program
- Open houses at showcase accounts
- Customer application centric newsletter with color pictures
- Sports events sponsorships at tech conferences
- Corporate sports clothing for employees competing in the local triathlon, canoe race, walk for charity, Bay to Breakers, day on the bay, hill climb, etc.
- Free samples in partner's boxes
- User group sponsorship
- Industry group meeting hosting and sponsorship
- Sample real product as door prizes wherever you go
- Sponsorship of meetings and mashups

13. SUB BRANDS AND MASTER BRANDS

How many brands can we support? Should we only brand the company? Should we also try and give every product its own name, identity and branding characteristics?

These are typical strategic multi-level branding and marketing questions that many companies wrestle with for hours on end. The right answers for one company are not necessarily the same for others. They are certainly different for consumer companies, industrial conglomerates and high tech companies.

First of all, a simple answer:

Most small to medium size companies, can only support 2 levels of branding:

> 1.   The company itself
> 2.   Product or service brands

This is especially important when you really consider what branding is all about. Once again, it is so much more than just a name, an identity and a promotional campaign. It is absolutely everything you do or say about that product or service. It is everything the customer perceives about that product, service or company. It is every subtle way you and the industry have positioned the brand. It is the collective experiences of a lot of people interacting with the brand, on both an intellectual, emotional and sub-conscious level.

So here we learn that most companies have neither the time nor the concentrated effort to support too many brands properly. Which is why branding a family of products or services should be based around a collection of products or services that one day might be a standalone business unit or division, and not around any one given product in that group. Of course, there is often a lead product that has a similar name to the product family. As long as all the products

in the group have the same characteristics with regard to perceived broad-brush values, they can all share the same Product Family Name.

All the many Pentium chips from Intel share the same characteristics of speed, quality, the industry standard, value, etc. But when an "interloper" was introduced, it could have diminished the value of the Pentium Brand (which in turn would reflect on the parent Intel brand). Instead, it was given a new name and identity, and today the Celeron chip family has its own position and perceived brand values in the computer publics minds.

Notice that today there are many Pentiums…the I, II, III etc. There are no Sexiums, Septuims, etc. as there is not enough brand space between them, and even Intel cannot support too many brands. Similarly, they can stretch the brand high and up (since that was its original positioning anyway), but they could not easily stretch down. Notice how the Intel Inside promotion is just that. This was a corporate awareness promotional campaign. Notice how the Celeron and Pentium families have their own positioning. They never appear together in any real branding messages. They do not ignore the parent brand, but at the same time, they leave corporate name promotion to corporate. And the Celeron Brand Managers/Product Managers put all their heart and soul into promoting Celeron, as do their counterparts across campus at the Pentium plant. Similarly with the newer Centrino.

Similarly, Sony would never diminish its earned brand reputation by offering lower priced or lower quality products, even when they feel strong competitive forces taking them that way. When they wanted to enter the computer gaming market, they needed a way to compete with the very powerful (in the target market sector), brands of Nintendo and Sega. Names that were both product and company names - with a complete and utter dedication to the customer experience.

Everyone knows Sony is in many lines of business, and at the time, had very little involvement in the computer gaming/entertainment business. So they introduced a new brand name: PlayStation. This

brand has its own autonomy, though it also benefits from the parent Sony name. But it has a different set of values, targeted at a different audience. Notice how PlayStation sponsors major international sporting events, without the presence of a Sony logo. Notice how PlayStation will get into down and dirty price wars and special promotions. But does PlayStation have any sub-brands? Definitely not! Subsequent products are not just named PlayStation II or PlayStation Portable for naming convenience. They are so named to be part of the power of one brand. To ride it to its utmost success, to help grow it, and never to diminish or dilute it. Similar stories have played out so well for their Trinitron T.V's, Walkmans, and other product lines.

Another similar example might be in larger software houses or consulting practices. Adobe has Acrobat, PhotoShop, Illustrator, Premiere, etc. product families. Different product families have different characteristics and values, though by and large in this case they inherit the parent companies brand values since the product lines are used in similar markets. But the product family names do not have children with different names! Here is Adobe's brand hierarchy:

```
Adobe        Master Brand                   Level 1
   Fonts     Descriptors        Level 1 descriptor
 Photoshop        Sub-brand                  Level 2
   Plug-ins       Descriptors Level 2 descriptor
          Mac/PC versions   Descriptors
  Illustrator          Sub-brand
  Premiere             Sub-brand
  Postscript           Sub-brand
  Acrobat        Sub-brand
          PDF Writer       Descriptors
          PDF Reader       Descriptors
          Etc.
```

There can be a number of products or services at level 2, provided there really is some level of separation between them, but none can have branded children. Why? Since then the buyer might not implicitly recognize their position in the branding hierarchy, and serious brand dilution might occur. For many companies, the master brand is the only brand they can afford to promote in their founding

years, which also greatly simplifies their legal headaches.

Adobe's first products were fonts. They cannot own the word "font" but they can, and do, own Adobe Fonts. Work hard to gain a registered trademark and legally clean master name (usually encompassed within the company's tradename), then just use it with appropriate descriptors. A variation on this theme is the way Microsoft has, through explicit usage and registration, claimed the prefix "MS". Now they can put any common word like "Office", "Word" or "Excel" behind it and they have a unique defensible name for each that clearly positions them as siblings in the same brand family.

Note that your brand hierarchy is based on your customer messaging and positioning. It is not based on how you are organized internally. When a user gets a copy of Acrobat, he has no prior knowledge of which division or location of Adobe produced it, any more than he knows wherein Sony that Walkman came from. However, I suggest if you can, do not split the development (or at least the marketing) of a given product across more than one group or division, and where possible, not giving one division of the company responsibility for more than one brand. This ensures total concentration on that brand. Which translates into customer recognition of your quality, care, support and devotion to their personal needs. All the things to make a brand so powerful. These are the things that PR and advertising cannot achieve for you. A division can even protect and grow its own sub-brand as other groups may falter.

If a sub-brand becomes extremely successful, you might even have the interesting problem of the children being more famous than the parent. In Tokyo Electron Company's case, the child became so famous that they adopted its name for the parent company – Sony.

While Sun Microsystems balance sheet might have been dominated by their server sales, their hot little software product (which had in a single brilliant branding stroke been renamed Java), was creating its own runaway successful brand. To the millions of PC and web developers, not to mention many smart consumer web users, Java was simply something that is part of web browsers. In a small

effort to try to have their corporate name re-associated with this phenomenon, notice Sun disabled www.java.com and after some investigation you would eventually find you have to go to www.java.sun.com instead. Why couldn't they just put a simple message at the home of Java.com saying it is a Sun product and redirect users there – making first brand impressions so much better for the new online programmer. Of course, Java now belongs to Oracle and they have quickly fixed this.

Larger companies sometimes have a separate problem of how large a brand can be, since you cannot stretch one brand too far unless you give descriptors to what would normally be the level 2 brand names. E.g. Amazon Books vs. Amazon Music vs. Amazon Toys. It is very hard to own consumer mind-share for toys, when you already occupy the slot in their brain for books. So now Amazon is working on you thinking of the brand Amazon for all of on-line shopping. We beg to ask the question, why didn't they name the Music system Mississipi.com, and the toys Nile.Com, and Rhine.com for gifts, and save Amazon just for books? Then the parent company could be Big Rivers.com!! (Yes…I know…the domains were taken!)

There is a fast growing consulting company in the Midwest called "Audit Force". Except today they do I.T. consulting, recruiting, tax work, and others specialty practices. All these newer practices labor under the parent company name. Don't you think it would be better for the Audit practice to adopt the parent company name? Then go ahead and rename the parent something like Consulting Force? And allow the other practices to be Tax Force, I.T. Force, Recruit Force, etc. This would then be a great example of 2 level branding. A case where all the products and service brands have a direct name tie-in to the company name. But each could have the right tone and message for its target audience. By adding brand names the company will have simplified its branding. This is a simple case of where a company has outgrown its brand. The same is going on at Salesforce.com but that brand is so strong I think they are reluctant to change it, even as they go into many other departments over and above sales.

Motorola no longer makes car radios, but the coined generic name lives on as its association with car radios is not that noticeable or dominant. (From Motor cars and Vitrola radio). Other companies may have outgrown their brand names and should retire some of them. Or new divisions or departments that have grown over the years may need their own identity. There is a quite simple "taste test". Say the parent company name or brand name. What associations immediately come to mind? Is there a division, product line, or service not covered by these associations? Are these missed associations 20% of your business (or business directions)? If the answer is yes, this family of products or services needs its own brand …and eventually maybe its own identity. In extreme cases, it may even need to be spun off to find its own identity and grow independently. Witness the Lucent and Agilent stories.

Some other cases are in any organization that has specialty consulting practices or vertical market products or services. A company name will seldom stretch far enough (and may even be "barbed wire" – see below), to cover all the branding needs of all groups. In almost all these cases, the Pharmaceutical Product group needs a different family name to the legal Consulting group, to the Educational Software Group, for example. This is especially true if the parent company name has been around for a while and implies something else in the new prospects' mind.

In some other examples, Price Waterhouse merged with Coopers and Lybrand. And today the company is called "Price Waterhouse Coopers and Lybrand". What a mouthful? But at least it is a way to keep all their brand equity alive, and a recognition that the two partner companies are on an equal footing and in the same business.

The human brain is a very cluttered entity, besieged by messages every second from multiple sources and media. To the point where information overload is a common serious problem. But people absorb brand information from other ways too. It is often said, you need to allow them to experience the brand, if at all possible. Saturn cars did a fabulous job of experiencing the brand – in addition to, and as opposed to, only the car itself.

First and foremost you have to let your buying publics to climb past the barbed wire around your front door. You have to lead them up such a simple clean path to your foyer that they don't know they are walking down your garden path. A clean, elegant simple name and message is what we are talking about here. It has always been important. It is doubly so in this day of the internet, where people only have so many minutes of connect time to find you. Guess what the domain name is for Price Waterhouse Coopers and Lybrand? It was pwc.com until someone recognized the toilet humor in that…. now it is PwGlobal.com. Why doesn't Mr. Lybrand complain about getting dropped off the list? Better still, why don't they change their name to Lybrand?

Finally, when the product or service name grows stronger, you may have to divorce your parent. Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza was discovered to give mixed messages, instead of riding off the equity of the parent brand. Yes, introducing a new brand to weary road warriors is tough. But piggybacking off the wrong brand, which like it or not had years of brand characteristics seared into the traveler's mind, was just not working.

In hindsight, it is easy to see that cheap, affordable, pervasive, tourists did not compute with upscale, elegant, full service, business travel. Besides which, they discovered, the title was simply too long. So today, Crowne Plaza stands alone and forges its own brand and identity for the upscale business traveler. And competes with Hyatt and Hilton totally ignoring the fact that Holiday Inns, and Days Inn, and Best Western even exist. Behind the scenes, the accountants might be merging the books, but this has nothing to do with branding and marketing.

14. BRANDING COMPONENTS AND EMBEDDED PRODUCTS

"I hear what you say in the foregoing chapters, Athol, but we make embedded hardware or software or ingredients. People can't touch or see our products. We can't brand them!"

To which I reply, "Didn't I see you exhibiting at the Embedded Systems Conference or the Software Developer's Forum?"

How can there be a major trade show to showcase products that can't be seen? Do people stand around and point at little black chips and say "You can't see inside here, but if you could our algorithm is the heart of the engine"? Answer: yes they do…but that's not the point. The point is there is a way to show and demonstrate anything in the world. Hence there is a way to brand anything and everything. If they can brand life insurance (that you can never see and your estate will only collect on by you dying!) then you can brand internal components, software, hardware and any other embedded or OEM products.

We must add a qualifier here that only a few key ingredients or components can ride along with the final product's branding or the messaging becomes so diluted nothing works and the buyer is confused or even turned off. This is the same reason major promoters limit the number of sponsors at a given event. To make sure those sponsors have clear air to transmit their messages. But you can still brand your products in the minds of those who select and approve your components for their own design efforts.

Before we can get down to your specific case, we need to discuss the most visible and unusual embedded branding campaign of all time – the Intel Inside program. A campaign, that incidentally, is now causing a problem for Intel because (a) partners are addicted to their advertising support dollars and many contracts are open ended

whereby Intel continues to pay these coop funds, and (b) since surveys now show people see and hear "Intel Inside" but often still believe it means "Pentium Inside" and don't want to migrate to other Intel processor families!

The campaign has therefore become almost too successful – though that is open to debate. What is not open to debate is the fact that this is the most expensive single technology branding campaign of all time, and will never be repeated. If Intel hadn't been printing so much money, its investors would have been yelling at the enormous amounts of money they were spending on this campaign. Of course partners embraced it – wouldn't you mention them if they paid half your advertising costs? Print, TV or radio no less!

If you want to do such large campaigns, rather look to examples from Cisco or Yahoo or similar with their "Powered by" branding campaigns. A good clean mini logo and a great partnership program with an active, empowered and aggressive relationship manager and sales force can achieve a lot of brand awareness by piggybacking on their clients' messaging. But only if you make it simple for them. As a lawyer recently explained to me" "You mustn't let the lawyers run the show. You must tell them just what you want and that you want it done – clean and simple." [Aside: This lawyer had recently attended a marketing course and was seeing the world in a whole new life!]

If you are reading this book, you probably don't have good name recognition and a large partnership program yet. Not a problem! You just need to have the right attitude or find some people with the right attitude. Because you can't brand components and embedded products without (a) spending a lot of money saying things like "Hey – know that product? Well we make the widgets inside" (b) a good public relations campaign telling user success stories and how your components were used, or (c) great partnership marketing to the point of guerilla marketing.

In fact, you might want to read Conrad Levinson's Guerilla Marketing book right after this one. Your components or technology

may be invisible, and your major competitors may be launching big public assaults, and other new players may be amassing to surround the market, but relationship marketing is still about people. And if your little guerilla team visits, helps, thanks and rewards personal efforts from the major partner(s), you will be heard and you will be extremely visible!

Before I proceed with some tactics you can use, realize that most of these programs are bi-directional. In channel marketing, we like to say that if you make your channel partners rich, then you will make yourself rich. Similarly here. If you make your partners, customers, integrators, etc. famous, then you will make yourself famous too. Just because they are bigger than you doesn't mean they have more access to the press or a good promo manager – in fact they might be highly distracted by other messaging and see you only as part of a niche solution – or less.

Realize also, that the press is always looking for a story that suits their readership. They are not looking to write about your widget by itself, unless it is a very unique - one of a kind new item. (Yes, I know all your products are breakthrough items and you have had this kind of press coverage in the past, but what coverage do you still have 18 months after announcement?) So you have to serve them up a story or parts of a story – to which they will probably find a counterpoint to create some tension and suspense, like a good novel.

Which means you have to probably involve your customers, their customers and partners too. You might even have to mention other component suppliers, technologies and integrators as well. It also really helps if you involve some real people. Joe the engineer, Claire the integrator, Sergio the software guru, Rashid the tester, Verushka the industrial designer, and Rafael the artist. Your story is coming to life. And as this effect gets repeated and transmitted, your brand is coming to life. Especially, when all the players involved have been personally visited by you, have received their own proper reprints, and are now the proud owners of a cool, coffee cup, along with a mouse pad with your logo and slogan. They have been asked

to serve on your next design input focus group meeting (where no doubt they will be even more indoctrinated onsite with your brand) - and remember it with that nice pen and folio and debug tools gift voucher.

Will all your customers let you do such campaigns? No, of course not. Some will fall over their feet either trying to help or trying to get out of the way. Expect only a percentage to succeed. After all, your salespeople don't close every lead they have either. Which is exactly why they go out prospecting each week to fill the funnel.

Have your partnership team read Guy Kawasaki's book Selling The Dream when they get discouraged. After all, they are "selling" the intangible benefits of partnering their messaging with yours. Obviously your customers don't want to waste any time or money doing little things like promoting you. But they do want to be known - often on a personal contributor level. They are human and they do want to save marketing dollars and they do want to have you spread the word about them. So make a list of what you can do for them too, and make it all part of your co-op branding kit. Remember, you have to make them famous too. So if you expect them to do anything for you, you have to do things for them – everything you can think of, except sending them money!

So be prepared to reciprocate!

Be prepared to link into them from your website (see next Chapter for more details). Be prepared to have to mention them in certain brochures. Be prepared to invite their executives to your industry panel. Be prepared to quote them in your next press release. Be prepared to give all the golfers that nice company polo shirt off your back. Be prepared to have your graphics person clean up their logo to send to the printers. Be prepared to send your team to the triathlon they are sponsoring. Be prepared to lend them equipment or help with their show presentation and press conference.

Above all, be prepared to make it easy for them to include you in anything else they are involved in…et cetera…et cetera... Whichever

way they want your logo or information, dish it up. Print, electronic, plain, fanciful. In fact, hand them sheets of glossy stickers if need be to put on their boxes. Give them sheets of stickers in different sizes anyway. Give them toys to put in their cubicles. Heck! Do anything to make sure they remember you – even send them pizza with your name on it if need be. You don't have to target all of their company. Just the people who are known to get things done.

You only need to influence the influencers. They will help spread the word until the tipping point occurs.

15. ONLINE BRANDING

What took so long? Fifteen chapters into a book for propeller heads and we finally get around to the web and online services! Well, I didn't want to push the cart out before the horse. I know it is not easy. For years I was so eager to rush the development of websites, thinking it gave us a major advantage. And yes it did, if we knew who we were and what we wanted to be. Even so, I couldn't grasp an understanding of why some major brands were slower in embracing the web. It was only as my hair turned more gray did I realize it was because it was better for them to do it right and be late rather than do it in a rush and compromise their brand.

There are many excellent books about online and internet marketing, and most of you have a lot of web experience. Also, there are many references throughout this book to the use of your brand in all public materials, so I think all that is left is for me to provide you with is a web checklist and then talk some more about email. Don't cheat! This is not for public consumption or to cast aspersions on any person or department in your company. But it is real. Look honestly at each of these items through your new rose tinted glasses to see if your brand promise is properly presented. Do remember, the brand experience is all about the customer experience and not about you!

So start by making everything now customer or prospect-centric and throughout let them know what you do for them. This may be their first band touch point. This may be their first brand experience. They will be subtly influenced by little messages you transmit. They will grow to love and embrace you (yes, even technical engineers and scientists) if they get a feeling that you really care about them and understand what they need throughout your website.

Website Checklist

Site clearly looks like your flag ship store window.

Logo is clear and correct throughout.
Color scheme matches corporate identity.
Tagline is properly and strategically used.
Personality and tone match brand personality.
Brand values/personality are listed in background
section.
Website is prospect or new customer centric, not
self-centric.
Prospect contact points are phone, email and form-
based (for those surfing without email) and easy to
find. (See Customer's Bill of Rights) Some real person
responds always in 24 hours or less.
All pages are copyrighted.
Trademarks / Service marks are clearly identified.
Initial entry is a very positive experience.   All
pages are clear, precise and well organized and never
overwhelm the surfer. Bias is to a minimalist view
always on a given page. (Unless you are a junk ware-
house).
Site has been audited for access from prospects, cus-
tomers, press, partners and investors point of view.
Press and partners can download all co-op materials,
including logos, photos, etc.
All pages are in clear English and in manageable por-
tions. (No long-winded text-only pages)
No special tools or plug-ins are needed to visit your
site.
Public does not have to register to visit.
Where registration is required, it is quick, clean
and simple.
All printed corporate marketing materials are also
available online.
Customers can easily find where else to touch you, in-
cluding branch offices, trade shows, seminars, etc.
Customer stories (brand experiences) are featured as
well as many links to articles of your company in
print or elsewhere on the web.
Partners are encouraged to link to your site. You in
turn have a good link area to all partners – both
technology as well as sales. Also professional asso-
ciations.
Press are treated like royalty, with a full Press
Room where they can get everything to help generate
word of mouth, including very high res. print quality
photos.

Your website is listed in all the directories for
your target industries.
There is a home for the "loyalist" including histori-
cal background and information.
The website is a living entity. Parts of the web
change each week and someone has this responsibil-
ity - separate from, and in addition to your company
blog.
All pages have proper titles, both in the window and
in the title bar. Similarly for header keywords and
descriptions for search engines to grab onto.
Feedback is provided for any unusual experiences, es-
pecially if something will be slow to download.
You never "push" data at customers unless it was first
solicited by them.
Human-interest stories and links exist to create an
emotional branding tie in.
The site has value-add content to help position you
as an industry leader and player (however small you
are).
Your intranet (for employees only) also reflects and
teaches the brand.
Your customer extranet is the most positive experi-
ence you can make for a customer-of-one.

During the Internet gold rush of 1999, I used to say that www stood
for Wild Wild West or World Wide Wander. It was a crazy artifi-
cial world out there. Everyone was shooting and running in all di-
rections. Didn't matter what you did, as long as you hollered and
screamed a lot and ran around waving something in cyberspace.
Well, needless to say, that period of technology and communica-
tions change is over, and now people can get down to real work. It
is time to implement the proper, methodical, and sometimes slow
development of real presence, relevance, differentiation, credibility
and image to build a sustainable brand.

Of course, the web is only one aspect of branding online. Another
major one is email. When you studied brand touch points back in
Chapter 7, how many times did email come up? Probably the most
of any medium in a technology company. So every email that goes

out of your company is a branding event! Do your employees realize that? Are they allowed to do whatever they feel like? Really? Is it a company resource or a personal resource? Thousands of touch points a year, and no one lays out any guidelines!

All email programs make allowances for automatically attaching signature lines. So you have an opportunity to reinforce your brand name and slogan on every one of them, even though most of the world is not ready email-wise for a color logo on each one.

Unfortunately, for reasons I just don't know, when users configure their signature line, many programs give them a tiny pop-up window. So users naturally type in that window and shape, not realizing it can be sized up to anything. In addition, they then discover they don't know what to put in the line, so they put their full name and address and some witty comment or cause, all in a thin long column that no one will scroll down to read. We end up with something useless like this at the end of every message:

Athol Foden – Writer/Researcher/Namer
Brighter Branding
For a beary good experience
650-239 Castro Street
Mountain View
Ca 94041
Ph: 866-451-6198
Fax: 650-555-1212
amfoden@fodenpress.com
Have a berry happy day.

Oh shame, what a waste of a 10 sec personal commercial branding message…and the item they need most (the email address) is buried at the bottom. Would they even scroll down far enough to see it normally?

How much better if all employees followed three line signature guidelines, so the result is something like this window-wide footer:

```
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
*      Athol Foden – President      athol@BrighterNaming.com      *
*    Brighter Branding   - Best practices for the smaller business    *
*  866-451-6198 www.BrighterNaming.com  209-720-0202 (fax) *
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Try this out sometime. Notice how many people scroll down enough to see the whole message, and how it demarcates the end of what you have to say. For many people that hardly ever receive faxes you could leave that out too, and put a department in if need be. For the one in a thousand who need your street address, it is just a hotlink away.

By having management enforce a style like this, your client base will soon subconsciously recognize that it is email from your company, and they will know your name and what you stand for. Incidentally, this is a great way to test a slogan. Try some and see what feedback you get - but remember, corporate slogans, not personal ones.

Finally, it is a big pity if you do all this work and the world still has a hard time finding you when your prospective world searches on terms other than your direct company or product names. This is not Google or Bing's fault. It is yours for not properly optimizing your site for organic search engine discovery.

This needs a different kind of webmaster, or better still, a specialist in SEO (as it is called). To do it yourself, please see the companion title to this book called Brighter SEO - Organic Search Engine Optimization. Apart from how you tweak your website and use the power of PR, this book will also show you how to properly submit your site to many engines and directories in order to generate many link occurrences.

16. SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDING

Man's quest for communicating at ever faster speeds never ends, and the current social media phenomenon going on is nothing more than the latest iteration of that. In many parts of the world, and for many technology laggards, they are only now discovering the power and speed of email.

But don't tell that to the youngsters on campus. Email is so yesterday when you can instantly text, tweet or Facebook mail anyone in your circle of friends. Similarly, why pay an agency to put out press releases once a quarter when you can blog about your company news everyday if you wish.

If your messages get picked up and heard, they can spread like wildfire. They could even perhaps "go viral" if they are very popular and get passed around rapidly. At that stage they take on a life of their own. So what does this do for your brand?

Unlike advertising and to some extent old style PR, you do not have a lot of control of the message. But you can guide, cheer, regulate, and add opinions to the messages about your company and brands being passed around. I see a lot of smaller companies (and even bigger ones) where all the execs are wrestling with this new world where the consumer is so busy talking about your brand, with or without you. They worry so much about controlling the details of the message. They slowly hunt and peck their way to trying the new tools.

When I ask them why they don't just hire some college intern (or grandson or nephew or niece) who eats, sleeps and breathes this stuff to do it for them, they panic in case the youngster shoots his or head off about the company or the client. This sheer stupidity. The average mother sends text messages at about 5 words a minute, while her daughter is at about 60 words a minute. Dad is even slower though son is keeping up with his sisters. So why not find a re-

sponsible youngster, pay them to help you here, and fire them if they go too far off message or use to much text speak that your customer base doesn't understand.

The universities are turning out a great batch of writers each year, as well as junior marketeers and psychology majors. Rope one into the marketing team part time and it will be a win win solution. They can setup and show you how and when to use Twitter to send messages, how to build a big friend's community on FaceBook and LinkedIn, how to build and maintain a blog with the right tone, words and pictures, and how to tie it all back to your website and corporate messaging and presentations.

You in turn can teach them business responsibility, and when in doubt to shut up. But otherwise go and engage with customers, prospects and the community at large, provided you always use the name, logo, tagline and brand image and values properly. Ideally you only have to point them in a few directions and seldom reign them in. Look for the entrepreneurial student type - maybe the hungry one who really needs the job to pay for final year, for example. Someone who realizes they are not just working for your part time for peanuts, but are building their own resume portfolio.

Before you dismiss my advice above off hand, do know that I have two computer science degrees and have written many books and tons of marketing materials. As adults go, I am also a fairly early adopter of some of these new social media technologies. But I am not a natural online networker, other than to slowly keep adding to my LinkedIn profile and friends, and both my sons can text and tweet and upload while talking and chewing gum and walking down the street quicker than I can while at my desk.

Less than an hour after leaving my younger son's graduation in Southern California I saw a congratulatory notice on my email from my editor in Canada, who had been alerted by my sister in Spain, who had both seen it posted on Facebook. Yes, live for the world to see with full pictures from the event because big brother was bored just sitting still at the big outdoor ceremony.

Now how are you going to get the news out about your next company event, assuming it is newsworthy to at least a part of your audience? This is the new world. Proceed with care. But proceed if you want another competitive step ahead - at least for now - and use the infrastructure to promote your brand widely.

Then you too can put out real messages like this one:

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Please join me on http://LinkedIn/in/atholfoden, read
my blog at www.NameAwards.com and follow me on Twit-
ter @namiac.
```

17. BRANDING SERVICES

Before you get the coveted ® symbol from the trademark office, you have the choice of using SM or TM next to your name or logo. As a service business (that will never have physical products) you may wish to use SM to emphasize that you are in the service business. You will register, of course, under one of the international classes for services with the Patent and Trademark Office. The only difference between a service mark and a trade mark, is the fact that with a service mark you have no products on which to affix the mark.

When your president (or the prospective V.C.) asks, "Where did you get the market research numbers from?" You reply, "IDC or Gartner Group". There is an immediate creation of comfort and expectation of quality from a known research house. Sure he may have told you to save money. But if you came up with the same answers from your friend Steve's moonlight research consultants' service at half the price, would you be thanked for saving money? Same answers. Both were valid and good. One is believable and allows planning to proceed. Another one always remains questionable.

At least that is until your friend Steve develops a real name for his service. Then promotes that name as a well-known one through projecting a consistent design, logo and theme. And creates a good PR program, to position his as the friendly low cost market research house, by speaking at top industry events (or maybe hosting one) and inviting your CEO to his spring barbecue where he will present his latest forecast. Sure, Steve can be hired by the hour to do any consulting as well. Yet, Steve can better brand himself by having some standard service offerings, giving them key identities, pricing and positioning. Then these service products are vehicles themselves for brand messages, even if no one buys them exactly as they are portrayed in literature and on the website.

Services may be consulting, transportation, education, healthcare,

research, gardening, public relations, house cleaning, non-profits, insurance, construction, employment counseling or anything else where people are basically performing a service for which someone else is prepared to pay.

You still have products!!

Your product might be overnight shipment, or the jump-start P.R. program, or accounting services or even corporate landscaping. How are you going to package and present these? Each with a different look and feel, or all with a consistent corporate feel? Even if that feel is only graphically illustrated in brochures or business cards. Fedex has many different services nowadays (which are color coded for customer conveniency). But when the Fedex man walks in the door you know who it is at a glance. If they want to, the Fedex marketing team can control the color of the buttons on his jacket! A great advantage of having your own staff. And since their product isn't finished until the bill is paid for every shipment, even the accounting forms are Fedex color logo'd.

Waste of money or good branding? Where do they touch the customer most often? Who supports them or suggests employees find a cheaper shipper?

Some of the more famous marks in the world are service marks. Names like UPS, Accenture, United Way, The Red Cross, Prudential, E*Trade, Verizon, Geico and many others. In addition, many companies that are really producing hard goods also register their name and logo under the service category. Why? Both to add to its protection, and to emphasize the fact that they have services and support too. Hence, you find the English word for a plain little mud house, registered as a service mark too (for educational services). Of course, I am referring to the word Adobe. This gives them extra protection as well in case someone tried to use the name Adobe for integration services, for example.

But if you have been following the gist of this book, branding services is not much different from branding products. They are about

the customer experience. That is what a service business is all about after all! In fact, your employees may appreciate this reality a lot more, since so many more of them are likely to touch the customers' daily. You don't have products to put your name on. You do have many other brand message vehicles, in addition to your employees and their little business cards. Everything from buildings and vehicles, to uniforms and paper forms, from literature to little gifts, proposals, presentations, white papers, and from partners and websites to email and express mail. Plus of course, blogs, tweets, LinkedIn and Facebook communities.

Footnote: For service businesses, employee branding is even more important, and I trust that bigger organizations will read far more than the little we covered on this subject in Chapter 10.

18. NICHE PRODUCT BRANDING

What happens if your target market is only for a very narrow niche of users in a not so well publicized market sector? First of all, congratulations! Yes…I love people who target smaller niches, because that lets you be the leader in the niche. And allows you to grow as the niche grows, at least until the big boys develop an interest in the niche. Who are they going to approach first to talk about OEM or partner (or even takeover) relationships? None other than the market leaders!

But are these the leaders in market size or in brand recognition within that niche? Well, more times than not, the market leader is the brand leader. This is not because they spent any money on advertising their product, but rather because they created a good product for the target users and also provide a good experience in selling and marketing and supporting those customers.

But perhaps you are the second or third player in the niche. How can you stand out from the crowd until your sales put you in position one? Maybe you could be the price leader, but only if you have a radical technology or manufacturing ace up your sleeve. One that allows you to sell for less and still have good margins when support costs are accounted for. Maybe you can be the technology leader with a faster, better product, but that will be at a higher price. Notice all the perhaps's and maybe's here. From a branding and marketing awareness point of view, that is exactly what they are unless you do something consciously to be the brand awareness leader. Do little things that will make a big difference.

In a niche market, small actions on your part could have a larger payoff since the message channels and number of publics you have to deal with are so less polluted with other noisy industry messages. Yet, you have to resign yourself to the fact that you will only be a brand leader in your niche, and not a famous brand that Interbrand surveys for Business Week. At least, not until you win a couple of

other niche markets too. Then the combined effect showers you with a lot of attention and awareness.

So how do you proceed with niche product branding? By using the same techniques outlined in the early chapters of this book – but usually on a much more personal scale. Do not spend a lot of money. Take care with the steps and the people contacts in particular who deliver the brand promise. Every step will be magnified. You may be the first in the niche to have service people in corporate shirts, for example. Or the first written up in the local press or the small industry newsletter. You will probably be the only one sending out branded email and accounting forms, and having all your staff including their personal business cards with all customer communiqués. Then, you will surely be the only one spending personal time with prospects and clients asking them about their future needs, their product likes and dislikes, and sponsoring their kids on special days.

You don't have to spend a lot of money, but you do have to show you care - each and every step of the way. Better packaging, better service, better reminders and thank you notes, are all the course of the day. As well as better knowledge about and involvement in your customers and their problems and products. Make absolutely sure that all that are involved know totally your company brand values, and corporate slogan and all have good business cards.

One of your brand values should be something similar to "focus". Do make sure all employees know your niche goals and targeting. They have to be indoctrinated in the fact that they should have your single-minded dedication to this market. There again, remind customers that your goal in life is to be the best at what you do. Not at everything they ask you to do. Not at every little opportunity that blows by the front door or through the boss's brain. Not at what other remote divisions of your company are involved in.

Here is an example you golfers may have surely heard of – Cleveland. For years they had a single minded dedicated focus on wedges. Not drivers or irons or woods or putters or bags or clothing or

shoes or balls or golf courses. Just wedges. If you are not a golfer, you may have never heard of this brand, even though you somehow know other names like Callaway or Ping.

Suffice to say, that they did so well in their niche that they are the dominant supplier of wedges in the industry. They now have the money and recognition to move into more direct competition with the big names, along with other products in one of the most brand centric equipment industries. They are so well known now and positioned in their old niche, they have had to change their positioning while capitalizing on their reputation. This is all so beautifully encapsulated in Cleveland's current slogan: "Not just wedges anymore."

Don't you wish you had this problem?

Well it is more readily attainable than you may think, and is in fact easier than branding components or embedded products. Just because it is a niche, doesn't mean it is invisible to the mainstream press and purchasers. It just means it only fulfils a niche of a need and therefore doesn't get as much time and attention as the items in the major market sectors. Incidentally, a niche market for your technology may be a major market for other companies – so partnering with them can pay very large dividends.

Years ago I worked for a small communications peripheral company called Maxspeed. At the time I joined them they already had found two new customer areas – pharmacies and auto parts stores. In fact, my marching orders were to find the next niche like that. Yet they were still exhibiting at general trade shows like Comdex and putting out a generic message about their technology. Besides, they had at least six major competitors (most with more advanced technology from a design point of view, though few could match us on service) along with a number of smaller competitors too.

But the more I looked at their customer base and the potential markets for their products, the more I realized they were in this other area which analysts called Retail Information Systems or RIS. Of

course I knew nothing about this marketplace, despite 20+ years of technology experience and a couple of high school summer jobs working in retail. What I did know was that there are magazines and industry influencers and tradeshows for almost all markets in the USA. So I found a magazine that serviced this industry. Their friendly salesman introduced me to the right shows to attend and the right industry gurus to target. We eventually even ran some small ads in his magazine. So we went along to the retail information systems shows and found out that there were big companies doing other things in that industry, but our competitors were no where to be seen! Voila.

Suddenly, we were being seen, by the very influential buyers attending these shows. They were eagerly reading our news releases in the show and industry magazines. Only 4,000 or so people used to come to these shows, way less than the 150,000 at Comdex. But these were the 4,000 we had been looking for! And they had enormous buying power as the CIO's of the country's largest retail chains. We only had to befriend the editors of three different magazines and two industry newsletters.

It took nearly two years before one of our big competitors showed up at one of the main shows, and then they were simply scoping it out and not exhibiting. I'll never forget their faces as they came down the aisle and saw us dead ahead – they were so surprised they walked right up and directly asked me "What are you guys doing here?" No prizes for guessing who was also exhibiting the following year.

During this push into the RIS market, we were still using our same tried and true old technology. While the editors were friendly, there really were no technology news stories there for them to write about. What we needed were the customer experience stories to validate and expand our positions in the market. At Maxspeed, one of our few differentiators was our speed of sales, service and delivery. Maybe we didn't make the best or the cheapest product, but by darn we serviced our reseller channel fast and they loved us for it. (Next time you join a company with a name like Maxspeed, take your run-

ning shoes to keep up with the founder). Taking a lesson from one of our big partners, we decided to do some customer success stories too. If the press wouldn't write them, then we would simply have to do so ourselves.

Naturally, the usual problem with a small outfit was a tiny budget and only one full time person in marketing – moi! So I made a deal with the boss. Seeing that he had a decent camera and enjoyed using it, he could visit some key accounts and after the usual sales meetings, he would take some pictures of our products and someone to talk to me. I would create the case study sheets from there. We would only do them in black and white to save printing costs. Due to time scales and workloads, he only visited a few accounts and only brought me a few pictures. We encouraged the salespeople to get into the act and started asking their clients if we could write stories about them too.

Everyone said, "Yes," except one big chain that could not get clearance from their lawyers. Hey presto! We suddenly had all these pages that looked liked reprints from the local paper that I titled Maxspeed in Action. For half of them I scanned amateur photo prints – and for all of them I wrote the story from the customer's viewpoint. If I recall, we averaged less than $1,000 per story, including printing a few thousand copies on glossy paper. Their quality was only a small step above your local small town newspaper, but that was perhaps what made them so believable.

We actively spread them around everywhere. Wherever we went, we had a story to show most prospects that clearly had our name on it, but above all, the story was about a customer experience. Oh, you are in restaurants, here read about what Mr. X of Florida thinks. Oh, you are in golf club management? Read all about our Oregon VAR and what he did at the local country club. You're a pharmacy? Did you know our technology was under the counter at this big chain? Read the story and see the diagram on the back.

Even our VAR's and other integrators loved us too. Some of them used these stories as their chief personal piece of collateral, even

taking it off to shows like the big national restaurant show. We were happy to supply them in bulk since our costs were so low and the payoff so large. In fact, the formula worked so well, we did a series of stories about our products in use in the medical field too, and we thus could develop another niche simultaneously.

For the analytical types, I can hear you asking what was the specific ROI since you have mentioned some costs above here Athol. Well just before I stupidly left the company, out of the blue, one of our salesmen captured an equipment order for a complete pharmacy chain with 100+ outlets. We had never heard of them (which is very embarrassing and shows that some of my market research and awareness was flawed) but they said, "We understand you are the industry standard for pharmacies."

Don't you love being told that? Doesn't that justify all your branding efforts and focus on a market segment? And it was paying off for us on the bottom line. Sales were up while the marketing budget was the same as the previous two years.

Did you pick up on why else I love telling this story? Did you ever hear me mention any changes engineering did for us to become a standard in a niche market? No. Not one! Nothing, that wasn't in the normal product evolution anyway. Creativity and product marketing is rather the key to niche product branding.

19. HAVING SOME FUN WITH YOUR BRAND

Was one of your brand values way back in Chapter 2, fun? Probably not. But if it was or you have been chaffing at the bit and thinking this book has been getting a little too serious, now is the time to allow a little leeway for the friendlier side of your company.

As in all things that might change your carefully nurtured brand image, first you need to make sure that you do no harm. A lighter touch in your brand experiences does not mean you laugh at your customers or mock the industry, unless it is very carefully done and suits your management personality.

In fact, I had probably better warn most companies not to try having fun with their brand (unless they are a Disney-like operation) unless it comes very naturally or clearly will help them communicate with their target audiences. Southwest Airlines can do it so well because they have leadership that practices fun as part of their management philosophy. This is a major, major differentiator vs. other airlines, making their service very difficult to compete against.

I can just see other airlines sending out stern memos saying, "Remember our motto is service with a smile – especially on routes where we compete with SWA." It does not work. Fun has to come more naturally. It cannot be commanded. But it can be implicitly encouraged by showing how you tolerate certain tasteful efforts.

Google's brand is clarity and simplicity personified. Which means it is in danger of even being accused as boring. (People won't confess to this, but many people love rainbows of variety and action and color – or no one would shop at Walmart, for example). So Google has subtly poked fun at its own name from the outset, by actually returning your results below a Goooooogle name, where there is an "o" for every page of data they found for you.

Then they discovered they had one artist in the engineering team who liked to try and illustrate the name Google for special occasions. Yes, just one person does it all, which is not that unusual with fun projects. But whatever he comes up with, top founder management review and decides if it is appropriate to put up for a day. These illustrated logos always commemorate some event on the world calendar, though they never specifically spell out the design or the reason. But it does get you hooked. I told at least 4 people to visit Google the day their logo looked like Salvador Dali had a say in it. I surmise it was his birthday. And here is the logo that a few people told me about when this random and occasional great little fun idea originally started:

Yes, it was the day of cycling finals at the Olympics. By then the word had gotten around so that is why it has the little link to view the other doodles as they call them, because they never last more than a day. During a week in May 2002 they even brought Dilbert in to help "advise" them on changing their name. Great attention getter! So why don't you tune in to see what they have in store occasionally – and if they bring a smile to your face it will reflect Google in the mirror.

Incidentally, Google is one of the big brands in cyberspace today ….. but ask yourself where you first heard of them. Bet it was not an advertisement, since they have never spent a penny on advertising! And what was your first experience like?

In the entertainment and sports businesses, we are quite used to mascots, uniforms and images. Some teams, like the Oakland Raiders have the really nice problem of wrestling with a brand image that has taken on a life of its own. But who gave them that black and

white pirate look and mean personality in the first place? And isn't it, oh so appropriate for a product of their owner Mr. Al Davis?

The San Jose Sharks have taken a long time to grow into a team that can compete with the best of the best on a national stage, but they have always won the image award. Do you know that the color of their uniforms were tested to see what would look best on TV, given what colors were not already taken by much other franchisees? And I still clearly remember the day they announced their first colors and logos. There was an immediate outcry from the local press that anyone could have done a better logo, and here was a whole page full that their art department had whipped up, and wouldn't all the San Jose Mercury News readers please vote on a change.

We passed that page around the office, and nine of ten voted for the logo that is now so well known: The shark sinking his teeth into a hockey stick. One day soon I anticipate that someone is going to send me an email confirming this was all a planned publicity stunt and that the Sharks and Mercury News were in cahoots with each other to generate publicity and do a free and highly effective consumer market research taste test.

Boy, have they had fun with that theme ever since. Something I can really appreciate about their branding when I travel around the world and see other sports teams called the Sharks, even in the rough and tumble world of professional rugby, that haven't come even close to capturing the magic of this ice hockey franchise. Their merchandise easily outsells other teams on a world-wide basis as I found out personally while shopping for take home gifts in a small village in Germany. Hmm…do I rather go home empty-handed than buy a Sharks shirt over there?

Yahoo is another big online brand that is the opposite of Google

in style. But they manage to poke fun at themselves in their advertising and occasionally in some posters and bumper stickers and sponsor posters etc. with cries like "Do you Yahoo?" But when they takeover a company or add a new service, it is always strictly by the trademark law book of Yahoo as master brand and then a descriptor, following Yahoo's strict image guidelines.

For a while they had one exception sub brand that breeds more extreme brand loyalty than their master brand – Yahooligans!

Never heard of it? Time to borrow some kids and watch them do their homework. If you logon to Yahoo and look up Egypt say, you get thousands of hits about all sorts of current political and socio-economic issues, as well as the never ending debate about whether Egypt is really an Arabic country rather than an African one.

But if you logon to Yahooligans and ask the same question, it assumes you are a kid looking to do your homework. And it tells you about the pyramids and sphinx and Red Sea and the pharaohs. Voila! Just what I needed Mom! What's more, it dishes up the answers in a format and style appropriate to your age group. Today this is called Yahoo Kids and follows their consistent corporate branding guidelines, but it still works the same way.

If all this thinking of fun is making you thirsty, try a Diet Snapple. I'll leave it as an exercise for you to see how they explain what Snapple is made of and where all the calories went!

Some companies and names lend themselves naturally to having fun, as we have seen above. Others you have to look a bit further. Quick, who is the 'bunny suit' company? Why Intel of course, because they chose to be. Because you cannot see where they are inside your computer (except of course for technical propeller heads that know what they are looking for and even they can't see inside

the chip). Do other semiconductor companies have employees who wear bunny suits at work? Sure do, at least until a new way of making devices is perfected. Can they also ride the bunny suit story so people can have a little taste of the experience of making chips? No – the position is taken in the minds of the public. They will now have to find another angle.

One last sports example, also from the San Francisco Bay Area. When San Jose became a major league soccer team, Nike was calling all the shots on many of the leagues names and uniforms, and moving in quite a hurry too. Now Nike releases a new pair of sneakers almost every working day of the year. They just simply pump them out there and see what sells. It is cheaper than market research. So they have come up with a variety of names for all these products over the years.

But naming sports teams is a different kettle of fish. Unfortunately for the San Jose's team, they became saddled with the name Clash. What is a clash we all cried? What is that mascot? Why are there four standard colors in the normal uniform? What is their real color? After 3 or 4 dismal years, luckily the team had new owners who finally had some independence from Nike.

And, at last, they had a general manager who was prepared to listen to the will of the fans. After some decisive pushing from a certain rabid naming nut who had been sitting and listening in the stands, (namely yours truly), they brought back the name of the original pro soccer team from the Bay Area. We now have the Earthquakes who have since won the national title no less! More than that, the team has been sold off, but the name was retained and is being used again for the new team.

I offer up this last story because it illustrates something else too.

Names, brands and fun have to work for their audiences in their locations. To the rest of the world, the Bay Area can be a scary place because it is also home to the San Andreas fault and real earthquakes are very real. So to the rest of the world, earthquake is a negative word. But here it is life. An every day item to be made fun of.

Visit www.sjearthquakes.com and see the website shake, rattle and roll as Richter cheers it on. It fits just like the Steelers fit in Pittsburgh and a team called the Tornadoes might fit in Kansas or Oklahoma. All fun is a thin line between amusing and offensive, but nothing else makes a brand experience more memorable.

Finally, GEICO used to be a very conservative, even stuffy, insurance agency for Government Employees only. But today they are one of the big consumer insurance providers where their advertising gekko is a personality unto himself. He has become much more than an advertising eye catcher, he has become the face of the brand. Incidentally, during this massive marketing transformation for them, they were quietly fixing their customer service behind the scenes too.

Other companies that you all know that have fun with their brand include Jack in the Box, AFLAC and GoDaddy.com.

20. BRANDING FOR VERY SMALL COMPANIES

Firstly a clarification is required. If you are only a very small company because you are just starting out, then this chapter is not for you. If you plan to be a medium size company within two years and a large company some time after that, then please act like a larger business from the word go. (As outlined in the other chapters of this book.)

So you are a small company of, say less than 20 people, and likely to stay that way, and not become part of some national franchise. One thing you want to do as soon as you finish this book is to read Walk Like a Giant, Sell Like a Madman by Ralph Roberts. Unfortunately he overdid it a bit, for purposes of our example here, as he ended up with one of the biggest private realtor offices in the country.

While not strictly a branding book, guess what he is doing when he recommends you walk like a giant? He is creating an image and a personality for his company that stands out from the crowd. Since he doesn't just want to stand out for one year, he has to deliver on all his promises. So his clients end up with a great experience and keep on inviting him back.

I love the part where he visits all prospects and asks them about their jobs and goes on factory tours with them. He doesn't need to do this to sell houses. But what a way to form customer bonds! What a way to show you care about them as people at work. And, incidentally, what a way to get new referrals… as he is introduced around on the tours as "my realtor". Do you think he would be offered these tours if their experience working with him was below par? Of course not. He builds his brand with positive customer experience. So they develop that most important of all brand ingredients: Trust.

What do these branding giants have lots of? Something that they carry everywhere and dish out generously? Good business cards of course. He even includes one when he pays every restaurant bill. And did he take care to make good, clean, simple signs for his show houses, and offices, and cars? Definitely! While we are on the sub-

ject, if you network a lot to generate business, provide all employ-ees with a pocket "mini brochure" that is properly printed. At the right time they can whip them out and pass them around everywhere – so your contacts have something tangible to read and remember you by. I've even seen some great ones from overseas that fold into a business card size format.

Please note that it need not involve huge sums of money to create these positive images and experiences. It does take care that you are always conscious of the image you are creating for the business. Yes…image. Always, wherever you go, whatever you sell, however you ship it. Recently I was at a gift and jewelry show where a small importer I have some involvement in, was exhibiting. More than one person came by the little booth and said 'we' were at the wrong show (which we were), but we loved the compliment that 'we' were the Tiffany's of the show. Total full time staff of the company in the US at that time: 1.

Expensive booth you say. No, ours cost one-third the price of most of those 'pop up' booths that are so common. But big clean graph-ics…and especially a big clean logo that was extremely well lit.

At the first show, I saw them struggle a little to set the booth up - but it was their first show in the US and the booth is a little different. So I wandered around the aisles to see what other small fry were doing. A number had not even arrived yet, and later we saw they just un-veiled their shiny wares in the display cases and unrolled a banner on the back wall. It works. Right? It leaves a memorable impression for a long time? Not likely!

Then of course there is the technical 'extremis' as I call them. Some-one whose technical propeller is spinning so fast about their great technology, that the whole booth forgets they are in the sales and marketing game. You see, branding is too abstract a science for them to even start to be able to comprehend whether they are doing it right or not.

One in particular was particularly amusing, as he had all his equip-

ment and tools set up way too early. He was in effect open for business, even though the show didn't open until the next day. He loved to talk to any of the industry insiders who came by – and certainly didn't care that they were simply other exhibitors in blue jeans trying to set up their own displays. I watched for a while as to why he was so popular… and then smiled as I discovered it was because he was happily lending out his pliers, cutters and hammers, etc., to people who left their toolkit at home and had trouble with their own setup. Wow. Made him happy. Made him money? Not a chance!

If only he had stopped loaning out his tools and walked across the aisle and compared his booth to the classy neighbors sprouting all around him, then perhaps he would not have had such a lonely existence once the show got underway for real. Genuine prospects were attracted to the neat tidy booths with clear signs and good lighting, not to the funny old man with a bunch of 'techno widgets' on the table in front of some unreadable handmade signs.

So please, go to your office next week with a camera. Take some pictures of your building (from across the street, and from ten feet away), your entrance, your lobby or counter, your vehicles that visit clients, your website and all your stationery (including accounting forms), your product kits, samples and brochures that are handed out. Then take these photos home to strangers (or some high school kids in the street) and ask them if this is the kind of business they would recommend to their parents. Ask them if it looks like a consistently clean image and do they get what some of your customer values are. Doesn't matter what service you perform or products you produce.

Ever noticed how clean and shiny the chimney sweep man's truck, business cards and website are? Well, at least the one serving the upper scale neighborhoods. Ever noticed how building contractors who say they always show up in clean trucks, with cleanly dressed workers, and put plastic over your carpets before they traipse in, are the ones charging more and working on better paying projects?

You have all these tools with your name on them anyway. Why not

make it consistent so your name and message are slowly but surely branded on the minds of all that deal with you? And don't forget appealing to the other senses too. Have some stranger call your company while you listen on another line. Have them pose as a real sincere prospect trying to quickly hear the gist of what you do so they can see if they want to request further information or a sales visit.

If you think you have these items nailed down well, go read How to Swim with the Sharks Without Getting Eaten Alive by Harvey Mackay and see his many rules for dealing with customers. Also why he thinks the receptionist is one of the most important people in the company. Must work. He went from selling envelopes to being a multimillionaire. And if your little company failed the first impression test above, then you really had better stop here and go read Mr. Mackay's book.

Finally, people have other senses too. If your place smells, do not think for a minute that people will not notice. If you have samples or packaging or whatever, leave some in the lobby so people can touch them, as we all have good tactile senses. And if you are often grumpy, go out back and let some happy person run the front office. Let them bring in fresh flowers once a week too.

"But I am a management or computer consultant," I hear you crying. "I have a computer science degree from one famous engineering school and an MBA from another fine institution. I don't have the same issues as these local service industries. I engage with clients because of the expertise I offer them."

Oh, really? Do you have a steady stream of prospects and is your business growing and is it recommended by many others? Do you have a clear slogan and value proposition? What are you hanging your hat on to differentiate yourselves from the other thousand independents out there? Do you have an information rich website that doesn't look like a primitive hacker from the early 90's made it? Can it stand the image test when stacked even closer to the big name consultants in your field? After all, the people they assign to customer projects are probably less qualified than you.

Last week I went to a public seminar on future technology trends and met someone who was obviously also just there for the networking opportunities. Eventually I got a business card out of him – which I haven't finished reading yet as it had so much information on both sides. Besides, I had to try and follow along for five minutes while he gave me his thirty second elevator pitch. Luckily he had me trapped sitting down or I would have wandered off to meet some more people during that precious time. I guess he knew I didn't get it or remember him that well. Today I received a long email from him, reiterating what he does. My eyes glazed over just at the length of the intro message … but he was a nice guy so I visited his website. Ouch! Merely, some free tools with real basic colors and buttons. I know many a 12-year-old who can do better. Enough said. I wish him well - and hope you are never in this boat.

Finally, you need consistency, consistency and consistency with a clean, simple message and great service to build a brand. It's not easy in small businesses to stay on track. But let your offerings change rather than your high level image and position. And anyone can look professional online.

Footnote: While you should carry lots of cards and give one to everyone, don't think you can shortcut the process and give out multiple cards to one person and expect they will pass them on. It is not the same experience for the receiver and it doesn't work anyway. Maybe it even insults a little.

21. Brand Management with Integrated Marketing

Good brand management requires a concerted effort to ensure that all marketing and other messages are consistent and subscribe to the core brand values, promise and visual and other identities. These will not happen naturally. Rather, left to their own devices, the different departments and creative services will come up with their own interpretations, extensions and variations on the brand. You have to bring them all together and let them bash heads with you and one another. You need to let them all walk in the customers' shoes. It's not about the technology. It's about what the customer wants and above all, is prepared to pay for.

The devil is in the details. Little things can and definitely do make a big difference.

Most companies have a number of outside agencies handling various parts of the communications mix for them, or else they are large enough to have various internal departments handling it for them. In either case, unless you are a very small operator, there is seldom one single focused person empowered to protect and promote the brand. The ultimate brand manager is always the CEO. He or she must therefore chair a kickoff brand management meeting and ensure it is reviewed on a regular basis (but definitely no less than once a year).

Obviously, everyone who directly affects the brand should be invited to this meeting. It should be an obligatory requirement to attend physically in person if they want to keep your contract for the following year. No web meetings or conference calls. To be immersed in and to subscribe to all the tenants of your brand, they need to personally be exposed to all the facets and to show their contributions too.

Why can't I just have this meeting with my branding agency and let them lay down all the rules? Because you probably don't have an agency that is responsible for the complete brand promise! It is

extremely hard to find a single agency that will handle your visual branding, your PR, your trade shows, your customer support dept, your facilities, your internal printing, your product design. In fact, I venture to say it is impossible unless you are very small and subcontract this all out to one multitalented individual or consulting group. In which case you also have to give them authority.

So more likely, you are going to invite the following parties to your brand management meeting:

All of your outside agencies, including:
- PR Agency
- Advertising Agency
- Trade Show company
- Direct Mail company
- Web design company
- Printing companies
- Packaging company
- Industrial designer
- Sponsorship agents
- Interior decorator
- Architect (if appropriate)
- And any other merchandising or 'marcom' agencies you use

Your internal stakeholders, including:
o All marcom management of any kind
o All product and marketing managers
o All lead product visual designers
o Facilities
o H-R management
o Sales and Service management
o Accounting

The meeting should be held at your own facilities especially where there is room to show and tell and experience any new branding decisions that have already been made. If appropriate, put up the tradeshow booth in your warehouse and have them all camp out there in the middle of it.

Put up a big sign that says:

A Brand is a Promise of an Experience.

[**ASIDE:** make sure the agencies send the people who actually do the work. If account executives show up by themselves, send them directly back to get the creative types.]

Provide everyone with all the existing brand materials … but pass it out piece at a time. So each can be discussed and absorbed. The bigger the signs the bigger the mental brand impressions. So you will need big signs of your brand values, your logo in various usage forms, your slogan, your brand personality, your 10 sec positioning statement and any other items that are part of your brand framework that have already been decided upon.

It is good psychology to invite the different parties to present their pieces. This will empower them to say in their own words what they are doing and let them verbalize their homage to propagating your brand. PR and service need to tell stories about their case studies and customer stories, about their white papers and competitions and various speaking opportunities. Perhaps you want to present them with a copy of Integrated Marketing by Joseph Lepla, one of the few books by an agency that doesn't promote their own flavor of marketing (and dramatically illustrates how your ad agency can spoil your brand).

Also, here is a powerful quote you can use that has now been proven in The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell:

Little things make a big difference.

22. The Golden Thread

We end this book where we started.

A brand is a promise of an experience.

Remind ALL employees of this regularly. Make sure they continually add value and enhance your integrated branding campaigns at each and every step of the way.

Your brand is the golden thread that runs through all your actions - whatever your department, whatever you are doing. Why not start The Golden Thread award to be awarded quarterly to the employee who does the most to ensure someone outside your company has the best of brand experiences?

Appendix A

Roseann.com
Original Brand Characteristics
A sample brand persona

A "Roseann" lady is:

• Slender, elegant and energetic (logo includes a single yellow rose bud)
• A professional, independent business person
• Loves books, photography, live theater and the arts (especially sculptures)
• Dresses well based on latest European styles, but is comfortable in shorts
• Is especially fond of unique and different quality jewelry from remote countries
• Is white, black, hispanic or asian, and always prefers multi-racial environments
• International in outlook and style so she travels every year - alternating between posh resorts (like ski lodges) and adventure travel (especially safaris) – always seeking a newer adventure sport in Africa or America
• Supporter of wildlife (adores the Wild Cat family < a Leo herself>and those unusual species –like awkward Giraffes with velvety eyes) and nature causes
• Would rather do without than buy any copy or second hand product
• Knows how to cook – but finds daily cooking boring, loves cooking intimate suppers with an unusual & international flare, but above all else loves fine dining coupled with good and varied conversation.
• Knows how to entertain – but only by organizing, not doing (Of course- she's far too busy to bother with trivialities in the hot kitchen!)
• Is bilingual and interested in other languages and cultures

- The words politics and religion are not in her vocabulary (except for comedy)

- Knows (and cares) more about golf and skiing than kids (hers are all grown up independent –professionals – as much as she loves them!)
- Does not care for football, baseball, basketball or other rabble rousing sports
- Hates bureaucracy and big companies. Likes to cut through to the chase and just do it
- Would arrive at the symphony or theatre only in a small or midsize BMW, Jaguar, or Mercedes (which she drives herself) – dreams of that yellow convertible SAAB
- Focused on the big picture and direction in life (not little details or penny pinching) while planning on running her own business one day.

Appendix B: Customer's Interactive Bill of Rights

1. Customers have the right to contact a company 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week (and at least, be able to leave a message).

2. Customers have the right to select from a variety of ways (phone, fax, email, voicemail) to contact a company.

3. Customers have the right (e.g. option) to talk to a human being without being subject to multi-levels of an automated voice response system.

4. Customers have the right to talk to a person with enough authority to make a decision.

5. Customers have the right to talk to a knowledgeable person who has immediate access to information necessary to answer any reasonable question or complaint.

6. Customers are right 98% of the time – the other two percent they have the right to a sensitive and empathetic explanation of why they are not right.

7. Customers have the right to receive an "immediate" response, relative to typical use of the product (e.g. if product is used 24 hours a day, then response should be available 24 hours a day).

8. Customers have the right to be rewarded in proportion to their support of a company (e.g. buying, referring others, following procedures).

9. Customers have the right to not be subjected to intrusive phone calls and spam emails.

10. Customers have the right to privacy regarding their transactions (e.g. option to control the selling of their names to other companies).

Reproduced with acknowledgement to Dr. Tom Duncan.

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Spreadsheet Marketing   www.fodenpress.com
Planning for Success

Unrelated Titles by Athol Foden:

Emergency Golf   www.fodenpress.com
How to Survive Your First Rounds of Golf

About the Author

Athol Foden came to the San Francisco Bay area many years ago as a field support engineer while attempting to work his way around the world. After his next onward job fell through, he eventually migrated down the peninsula to Silicon Valley where he found many kindred spirit propeller heads, even as his own career evolved more into a technical sales and marketing role. He was a very successful product manager because he always understood the technology (mostly because he was still hacking on it when no one was watching), had a bias towards the customers because of his sales experience, and was blessed with a natural gift for communicating messages clearly and succinctly.

An entertaining public speaker, and for many years a popular marketing lecture for U.C. Extension in Silicon Valley, Athol has had plenty of first hand feedback and practice in advising smaller businesses trying to grasp marketing quickly.

Always seeking new creative endeavors, Athol has become fascinated with the science and psychology of marketing and dealing with influencers in all developer and sales roles. His own career has evolved into branding and marketing consulting and development, and now his hobby (a long fascination with names) into a business. In 1992 he co-founded NameTrade. When it was merged into Cintara he became their V.P. Branding before leaving to pursue some consumer marketing for a change.

In 2002 he started Brighter Naming (www.brighternaming.com), perhaps the only naming agency in the world headed by someone with two computer science degrees. Athol continues to also provide strategic business, marketing and branding consulting to clients.

Back in the 1930's Dale Carnegie documented the steps in a sales process, and in the last ten or twenty years, many have written books on marketing and branding. But somehow most of these are targeted at the people who are already experienced and practitioners to some extent of their trade. On the other hand, they weren't dummies either. So Athol felt a keen need to produce some practical and direct how to do it books for those who grew up concentrating on science or engineering or finance, and are only now discovering these branding and marketing areas as they attempt to go out and promote their invention of the day.

This grew partly out of the frustration he felt when he saw how often Silicon Valley folks, as well as other smaller businesses around the world, were trying to re-invent the wheel. They are too often acting like marketing is a new idea that is not precise and has no rules or methodologies. They don't get it is an old proven science that is practiced everyday in consumer and traditional marketing organizations. Hopefully this book will help in some small way and shorten everyone's on the job training time.

Athol would genuinely love your comments and feedback. He practices what he preaches every day though his other small business too: Safari Gold (see www.safarigold.com) and Foden Press - the publisher of this book (see www.fodenpress.com). You are invited to email him at athol@svmarketeer.com or visit him on the web at www.svmarketeer.com.

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