

7 steps to great branding

1

Know why you are doing it

Every branding process is a process of change - to take you to the 'next level', and not just to stand still. So your first step is to be very clear why you want to change in the first place. What does your 'next level' look like? Creating a new brand? A bigger audience base? A stronger relationship with your current base? Entering new markets? Connecting with a new type of customer? Increasing your visibility, newsworthiness and media coverage? Modernising to build greater brand desirability? Whatever it is, the first step is to be very clear on the business case for your branding project... what does your 'next level' look like?

2

Define the reputation you want

Your brand is your reputation - so the ultimate objective of every branding project is to build a stronger reputation. To do that, you need to know what reputation you want. And you must be able to define it in a single phrase - what **one thing** do you want to be known for? That will become the entire focus of your brand... it's called your '*brand promise*'. That brand promise needs to be tested in 3 ways to make absolutely sure that it's right...

- Is it true?* Will you continually be able to prove it, live up to it, never break it?
- Is it different?* Does it really make you different from the rest, or do other brands already promise it?
- Is it wanted?* Do your customers really want it? Why? These answers must be clearly articulated. If your brand promise doesn't survive this scrutiny then you need to start this step again. Your promise is backed-up by your '*brand convictions*' - those things that define what you believe, why you are what you are - what you will never compromise. They are your values - the belief-system that will underpin your brand and its promise - informing every future decision you take across your business.

3

Prove it

You have your promise, you have your convictions... now you need to prove them. In this step you must compile an exhaustive list of each and every way you live up to your brand promise, as well as how you will 'live it' even more in the future.

Then prioritise them - which of these proofs will be the ones that will ultimately define your new reputation? Your 'hero proofs'. This is the secret of really great branding - if you get this step right then your new brand reputation won't be soft or schizophrenic, it will be robust, consistent, authentic. It will continually prove your promise. It will make you clear, consistent, compelling. It will give you a story. This is the path to great branding.

4

Refine your brand identity and create your brand playbook

This is where the colouring-in begins. Up 'til now it's all been strategic - but this is the step where the branding process needs to get creative. First, you need to design or evolve your identity (if necessary) to fit your desired brand reputation - that's your name, logos, sub-brands, your visual style, tone-of-voice. Make sure these all combine to build, not undermine, your brand promise.

Then write it all down - your promise, convictions, proofs & identity - in a simple and powerful 'brand playbook', something that will explain and inspire everyone who's going to work with your brand.

5

Build your promise into your products

The next step is to review, refine and/or re-invent your products, services and features. Do they all keep your promise? Could they be delivering it more powerfully? Are any products breaking it?

You must ditch any products that break your promise, and upgrade existing products wherever possible to bring your promise more to the fore. Design new features, new services, even whole new products that will differentiate you by conveying your promise even more powerfully.

It's a common misconception that branding is only about marketing. It's not. It's about everything you do - and it starts with the products and services that you sell.

6

Deliver your promise through your promotions

The secret to great promotion (especially advertising) isn't to advertise your products, it's to advertise your promise. It really is that simple.

Ignore the millions of complicators out there who would have you create thousands of ads for hundreds of specific audiences in a whole host of languages using all the latest data and response-driven techniques (increasing their fees in the process). Because the true secret of advertising is to keep it very simple - advertise your promise, and PROVE it using the biggest and best 'hero proofs' that you have previously identified.

Those proofs may (or may not) be your products - but they could equally be your brand convictions, or even just simple facts. For instance, if the best proof of a promise of '*irresistibility*' is that you've sold out, don't advertise the product - advertise the empty supermarket shelves.

7

Instil your promise into your people

The final step of the branding process is to get your own people on-brand, so they will become your biggest and best brand advocates. You won't do that with funky coffee stations, a monthly powerpoint pep-talk, or even a good annual bonus. You'll do it by giving them something more powerful - a cause, a belief system, a brand promise they can truly feel part of. Take time to engage them in it and you'll be giving your staff the most important thing you can give them... Pride. And, in turn, their passion will make your new brand reputation stronger and stronger every day.

BE BRAND
NOT BLAND

THE BRANDING PROCESS MADE SIMPLE