



How to build a brand – tips from the top

How to build more successful and popular brands

The operating environment for businesses has become increasingly competitive in the last few years and even the biggest organisations have come under pressure from rapidly emerging rivals.

To help differentiate themselves from their competitors many firms have sought to build a compelling and appealing brand, but what does this actually mean in practical terms?

This Blue Paper sets out ideas of how organisations can begin to emulate some of the world's most successful businesses, but before we get going, we'll need to define exactly what a brand is.



There are many different views on what actually constitutes a brand. Some will say it is a name, image, phrase or any other distinguishing feature that enables one organisation to stand out from another, while others believe it is whatever the customer or client thinks of when they hear a company's name.

Chris Kocek of strategy and design studio Gallant sees it as simply as "your brand is your reputation." He argued that a business becomes a brand "when it transcends its category of origin and takes an existing core equity, or a particular philosophy, and infuses that idea into everything it does."¹

This, he said, enables firms to further their reputation or world views "one product, service or line extension" at a time. In other words, brands are not solely focused on selling their basic products and services - as they are aiming to become indelibly associated with certain emotions, lifestyles and beliefs.²

In this Blue Paper we will discuss examples of businesses that have made the transition to becoming bona fide brands and look at how they have used their brand to win the trust, respect and patronage of their target market(s). We will also examine what steps firms can take if they wish to emulate these companies and forge distinctive, successful and popular brands of their own.

¹ Chris Kocek. "The Difference Between a Business and a Brand." Entrepreneur.com. Web 08.03.14. www.entrepreneur.com/article/231292#ixzz2t5wrqfZG

² Chris Kocek. "The Difference Between a Business and a Brand." Entrepreneur.com. Web 08.03.14. www.entrepreneur.com/article/231292#ixzz2t5wrqfZG

Part 1: What are the top-rated brands in the UK?

It is true to say that some organisations have something of an aura around them, with everything they do managing to generate a buzz and a sense of excitement among their target market. Apple, for instance, manages to create a frenzy whenever it unveils one of its new gadgets, with even the mass media treating a product launch as a newsworthy event.

The annual Superbrands survey administered by The Centre for Brand Analysis provides a useful scientific measure of which firms can be classed as the best Business to Business (B2B) or Business to Consumer (B2C) brands in the UK. An independent panel of marketing specialists and business professionals was asked to see how well businesses stand up against the following criteria - quality, reliability and distinction.³

An organisation could therefore be classed as a 'super-brand' if it is deemed to have established the "finest reputation in its field," as well as "significant emotional and/or tangible advantages over its competitors, which customers want and recognise."⁴

The 2014 results demonstrate that the UK's top Business to Business brands come from many different industries, with the top ten reading as follows.⁵

1. Visa
2. Google
3. Apple
4. MasterCard
5. British Airways
6. Microsoft
7. BP
8. Samsung
9. Virgin Atlantic
10. Shell

Interestingly, some of the same names - including Google and Samsung - also featured in an international study by Brand Finance, which sought to determine which brands were the most valuable and the most powerful on a global scale.

³ Business Superbrands Web 08.03.14. <http://superbrands-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/files/2014/02/BSB-2014-Selection-Process-An42qK.pdf>

⁴ Business Superbrands Web 08.03.14. <http://superbrands-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/files/2014/02/BSB-2014-Selection-Process-An42qK.pdf>

⁵ "Business Superbrands 2014" Superbrands. Web 08.03.14. www.superbrands.uk.com/results



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Brand Finance examined criteria ranging from visual identity, employee satisfaction and online presence to consumer sentiment, desirability and loyalty. Car manufacturer Ferrari was named as the world's most powerful brand, while Coca-Cola, Disney, Rolex and Red Bull also ranked very highly.⁶

The sheer diversity of names and industries represented in these lists demonstrates that any company could potentially establish itself as a top brand. Firms that are actively targeting a mass market and businesses that are seeking to appeal to a niche, exclusive audience both feature strongly.

Taking this into account there is no one-size-fits-all approach to becoming a successful and popular brand.

Part 2: How have brands put themselves in such high esteem?

It's true to say, if there is no single way in which a business can establish itself as a top brand, it's worth looking at a variety of different methods that have been used by firms in various sectors over the years.

Devise a set of values

Many brands pride themselves on having clear principles that guide how they operate on a day-to-day basis. They can therefore provide vital assurances to customers that they are acting ethically, responsibly and sustainably at a time when these issues are extremely prominent. This has helped to position them as leaders in their respective markets that command both the popularity and trust of their target audiences, such as prospective clients and partners.

Here are a few notable examples of companies that stay true to their founding principles.

Ben & Jerry's⁷

- **Contribute to society**
The business should adopt innovative ways of improving people's quality life at home and abroad.



⁶ "Ferrari - The World's Most Powerful Brand." Brand Finance. Web 08.03.14. http://brandfinance.com/news/press_releases/ferrari--the-worlds-most-powerful-brand

⁷ "Ben & Jerry's Mission." Ben & Jerry's. Web 08.03.14. www.benjerry.co.uk/our-values/mission-statement

- **Offer natural, high-quality products** Items must be made from “wholesome, natural ingredients” and be made in a way that respects the natural world.
- **Manage finances sustainably**
Operate in a manner that encourages sustainable growth and increases value for stakeholders
- **Minimise environmental impact**
The business must act in an efficient and eco-friendly way, embracing concepts such as using renewable energy, offsetting carbon emissions and recycling.

Innocent⁸

- **Use only natural ingredients**
The drinks manufacturer pledges that all its products will consist of 100 per cent natural ingredients, sourced from suppliers who look after their workers and the natural world.
- **Be responsible**
Do business in a “more enlightened way” and take responsibility for its impact on the environment and society.
- **Use eco-friendly packaging**
Product packaging must use renewable and recycled materials as much as possible, so they can be reused again and again.



The Body Shop⁹

- **No animal testing**
The firm will not sell any cosmetics or products that have been tested on animals.
- **Community Fair Trade**
Suppliers will be offered good prices and trading practices.
- **Make customers feel good about themselves**
Marketing material will not use imagery that plays on women’s

⁸ “Being Sustainable.” Innocent Drink. Web 08.03.14. www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/being-sustainable

⁹ “Our Values.” The Body Shop. Web 08.03.14. www.thebodyshop.com/values/index.aspx

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insecurities. It will instead persuade them that “true beauty comes from confidence, vitality and inner wellbeing.”

- **Defend human rights**

The company campaigns on issues close to its heart, from domestic violence to HIV and Aids.

Sum up values with a slogan

Perhaps one of the simplest ways for a company to express its ethos and beliefs is to incorporate them in a strapline. This can almost be a mission statement for a business and an effective means of standing out from rival firms.

John Lewis, for instance, has set itself apart from other department stores with its ‘Never Knowingly Undersold’ strapline. While many firms adopt slogans, they perhaps do not always mean anything substantial, whereas the offer from John Lewis is a totally genuine promise to its customers. Therefore if shoppers find an item they have bought for cheaper in another store they will be refunded the difference.

The company is also distinctive in that members of staff are partners in the business, so as well as claiming to offer excellent customer service, it can honestly say it has the interests of its workforce in mind.¹⁰

Go beyond promoting products, services and offers

If the distinction between a business and a brand is that the latter has embraced a concept, philosophy or lifestyle, then they can be far less literal in their promotional efforts. For example, John Lewis’s Christmas advert in 2013 contained nothing about what shoppers could find in-store during the festive season.¹¹

Instead, the company made an impression on the public by showcasing a pleasant, heart-warming animation depicting cute animals, sound tracked with a cover of Keane’s track ‘Somewhere Only We Know’ sang by Lily Allen. This was a clear illustration that John Lewis was trying to tug at the heartstrings and tap into emotions that everyone can relate to.

It could be said that businesses want people to purchase their products and



¹⁰ “Never Knowingly Undersold.” John Lewis. Web 08.03.14. <http://www.johnlewis.com/inspiration-and-advice/never-knowingly-undersold-policy>

¹¹ “John Lewis Christmas Advert 2013 - The Bear & The Hare.” YouTube. Web 08.03.14. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqWig2WARb0>

services, however, brands aim to influence feelings and get people to buy into a specific way of thinking. For example Reebok has rebranded and is keen to promote the positive effects that physical fitness can have on people's lives, rather than its trainers and clothing.

"The new brand mark signals a clear purpose for our brand and it will be a badge for those who pursue a fuller life through fitness," commented Matt O'Toole, chief marketing officer at Reebok. "We believe the benefits of an active life go beyond the physical benefits and impacts your whole self and your relationships with others."¹²

Part 3: How can firms emulate the most highly regarded brands?

Produce words to live by

While each individual company will have its own distinctive aims and objectives, they can still draw inspiration from some of the methods we have outlined and apply them to their own business models.

Adopting a set of values and principles, for instance, could be invaluable in the current operating environment. After all, it is true to say that recent corporate scandals have not only harmed the reputations of various companies, but also led to people becoming increasingly cynical. Look at how revelations over some firms' tax arrangements led to them being shunned by a large number of customers,¹³ or how the disclosure that many processed beef products contained horse DNA dented faith in many retailers and manufacturers.¹⁴

With confidence in some of the biggest and best-known names being affected, businesses that are looking to build a brand might need to demonstrate from day one that they have a clear set of principles in place and show that they are being adhered to.

While the 2013 'horsemeat scandal' concerned firms who sold to consumers, businesses in other sectors also need to be careful, as partners in the business community would also be just as likely to disassociate themselves from a firm that has stepped into scandal or experienced negative publicity.

¹² "Reebok Signals Change With Launch Of New Brand Mark." Reebok. Web 08.03.14. <http://news.reebok.com/GLOBAL/reebok-signals-change-with-launch-of-new-brand-mark/1ff399034-0aac-4263-99ed-6104ef4eda20>

¹³ "Four in 10 might join consumer boycott over tax avoidance." The Guardian. Web 08.03.14. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/jun/10/consumer-likely-boycott-tax-avoidance>

¹⁴ "Horsemeat scandal dents consumer confidence in food industry." Which? Web 08.03.14. <http://press.which.co.uk/whichpressreleases/horsemeat-scandal-dents-consumer-confidence-in-food-industry/>



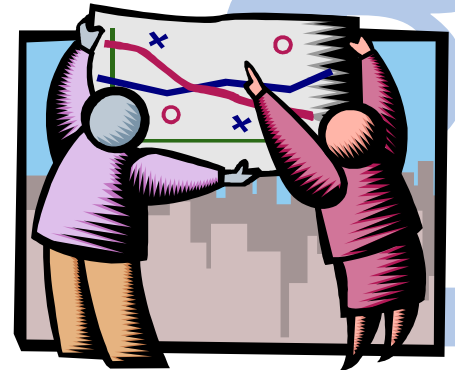
Therefore devising a set of values and principles could provide vital assurances and make a company more accountable, as its performance and actions can be measured against the standards it has set itself.

This point was perhaps well summed up by Ardi Kolah, author of 'The Art of Influencing and Selling,' who said the onus must not be on "just what the business does but how it does its business."¹⁵

"Trust is hard earned and easily lost," he commented. "To qualify as strong, values must be translated into measurable practices. They should also help drive vision and be relevant to those things making a difference between success and failure for the enterprise."¹⁶

Successful enterprises therefore need to be built on real values, not empty statements that have little or no relation to the truth. For instance, if a company wants to persuade its customers it is eco-aware, it must back this up with genuine evidence of its green credentials.

Firms could support this by carrying out market research, so they can understand the issues that matter most to the people they want to appeal to. If they know the opinions and how their target audience thinks, they are more likely to create a set of principles and values that resonate with them and make an impact.



Top brands do not gain a loyal core customer base by accident. They have targeted certain people and responded to the tastes and preferences of their target audiences. These firms know their customers and have actively worked to ensure they are fully in tune with what they want, demand, expect and need.

Show you understand the customer

Brands like Amazon have made their name partly because they provide highly personalised content. Amazon's website suggests products based on a customer's previous purchasing history¹⁷ and also provides recommendations of complementary products purchased by other customers. This kind of promotion helps to build loyalty as customers feel their needs and tastes are understood from the relevant and timely individual product suggestions.

¹⁵ "Successful enterprises need to be built on real values." Brand Republic. Web 08.03.14. <http://guruinabottle.brandrepublic.com/2013/11/07/successful-enterprises-need-to-be-built-on-real-values/>

¹⁶ "Successful enterprises need to be built on real values." Brand Republic. Web 08.03.14. <http://guruinabottle.brandrepublic.com/2013/11/07/successful-enterprises-need-to-be-built-on-real-values/>

¹⁷ "How Your Recommendations Works." Amazon. Web 08.03.14 <http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/help/customer/display.html?ie=UTF8&nodeId=15891441>

Companies should therefore gather as much information on their existing and prospective customers as they can in order to understand what they want and make sure they are able to offer exactly that - even at times when they are not actively looking to make a purchase.

Use social media to convey personality and values

Businesses in a huge variety of sectors have established a strong presence on many different social media outlets, from Facebook and Twitter to YouTube and Instagram. It's a highly affordable and effective way of not only advertising to customers and clients, but also engaging and entering into a dialogue with them.

This gives businesses an excellent opportunity to build and portray a brand identity, from the values they abide by to a genuine sense of personality, rather than a faceless corporate image.

According to figures from Kantar, some 56 per cent of people in the UK currently have a Facebook account, while 26 per cent are registered on Twitter. The statistics also show that nearly one in five use Google+, while others are signed up with LinkedIn, Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest and YouTube.¹⁸

Social media usage was found to be strongest among young adults, with figures showing sites like Facebook and Twitter particularly popular among 18 to 24-year-olds. However, other age groups are increasingly using them too. For instance, nearly one-fifth of over-65s have registered with Facebook.

And this approach does not have to be limited to businesses that largely operate online. Indeed, a recent study by IMGROUP revealed that high street retailers are "increasingly harnessing the power of social media as a means to actively engage with their customers."¹⁹

The information garnered by firms can help them better understand their customers, clients and business partners, so they can use this insight to continue interacting with them in a relevant, engaging and targeted manner.

However, companies must remember that social media is a broad discipline and that the people they want to attract might populate some sites more than

¹⁸ "Are you anti social media?" Kantar. Web 08.03.14 <http://uk.kantar.com/tech/social/british-use-of-social-media-sites-2013/>

¹⁹ "Next wins social media battle of high-street." Internet Advertising Bureau UK. Web 08.03.14. <http://www.iabuk.net/news/next-wins-social-media-battle-of-high-street#drRCptOq1uEdvUcC.99>



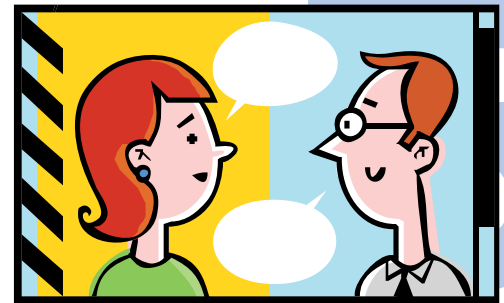
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others. A study by advertising specialist WPP found that nearly three-quarters of businessmen and women regard LinkedIn as the social media channel they trust the most to communicate with B2B brands. This contrasted with just 12 per cent for Twitter and five per cent for Facebook.²⁰

Of course, the headline figure might not apply in certain sectors, but the point is that firms that are looking to engage with other businesses can best accomplish this by using platforms their target market uses and values.

This maximises the chances of generating a meaningful discussion and genuinely engaging with the intended audience, which in turn may encourage word-of-mouth marketing.

According to a study by Nielsen, the recommendations of another person are still the “most trusted source of information,” despite the “increasingly diverse range of media platforms” available today.²¹ Using these platforms to get the target audience talking up a company to their friends and colleagues can therefore be a highly effective way of building a brand.



Reinforce values through imagery and logos

The biggest brands have instantly recognisable logos, many of which have been designed to convey the values they claim to espouse. Since a logo might be a person’s first point of contact with an organisation, it makes sense to ensure it encapsulates its values and principles as much as possible.

However, this can only work if it effectively complements other elements of a firm’s branding, from its tone of voice to its chosen colour scheme and typography. This is where many businesses have made the successful transition to a brand, with companies such as McDonald’s, Apple, Google and Coca-Cola all managing to create instantly recognisable logos that form part of a much wider brand strategy.

Brand Finance cited Ferrari’s logo as one of the reasons why it was named the most powerful brand in the world. Indeed, chief executive David Haigh pointed out that the “prancing horse on a yellow badge” image is familiar to people all over the world, even in places “where paved roads have yet to reach.”

²⁰ “73% Of Business People Say LinkedIn Is The Most Trusted Social Media Channel.” Stopgap. Web 08.03.14. http://www.stopgap.co.uk/blog/marketing_news/73-of-business-people-say-linkedin-is-the-most-trusted-social-media-channel-7207#sthash.07r1gLLC.dpuf

²¹ “Nielsen Breaking News - New Nielsen survey proves word-of-mouth is the most powerful selling tool.” Nielsen. Web 08.03.14. http://no.nielsen.com/news/documents/TrustAdvertising_BreakingNews2609b.pdf

“In its home country and among its many admirers worldwide Ferrari inspires more than just brand loyalty, more of a cultish, even quasi-religious devotion, its brand power is indisputable,” he observed.²²

Conclusion

It is clear that if businesses want to position themselves as brands, they need to embrace a particular philosophy and ensure every aspect of their operations adheres to these principles.

Successful brands can also make a point of communicating these values to their target audiences in innovative and engaging ways, using methods that tap into the emotional, rather than logical, centres of the brain.

The biggest brands are synonymous with ideas and concepts, rather than just the basic products and services they offer - and they aim to convey these abstract notions in everything they say and do.

Successful brands have also established an innate understanding of their target market, regardless of whether they are B2C or B2B customers. They can therefore use this knowledge to convey compelling messages that resonate with them and encourage them to subscribe to a certain way of thinking.

Knowing the intended audience is fundamental to devising a brand and creating a proposition that can be popular, respected and attractive all at the same time.

Organisations that adopt this approach should hopefully find themselves well-placed to make the transition from a business to a fully-fledged brand.



²² Ferrari - The World's Most Powerful Brand." Brand Finance. Web 08.03.14. http://brandfinance.com/news/press_releases/ferrari--the-worlds-most-powerful-brand

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