

— THE —
**BRAND
ADVOCATE**

A STRATEGY-DRIVEN WORKBOOK

BILL NISSIM

C O N T E N T S



Introduction.....	xi
Let's get down to Basics.....	1
Branding Basics Exercises	2
Unveiling the Essentials of Branding.....	6
Essentials Exercises	8
Marketing:Follow the Yellow Brick Road?.....	12
Marketing Exercises.....	16
Market Analysis.....	20
Market Analysis Exercises	24
Brand Traps	31
Brand Traps Exercises.....	35
Brand Metrics	40
Brand Metrics Exercises.....	42
Conclusion.....	44
BRAND STRATEGY GUIDE	45
Bibliography.....	47

Introduction

Who is the advocate for your organization's most valuable asset? Is that you?

How compelling is your brand story? If I said Hershey's™, do you think "chocolate"? Is Fed-X™ synonymous with overnight parcel delivery? In your mind, does Starbucks™ = coffee. Can you say the same about your organization?

These examples plainly demonstrate a simple, yet clear value proposition. Your ability to instantly make these types of associations illustrates a powerful brand strategy at work. Someone in each of these notable firms became the Brand Advocate who gave life and meaning to their product or service. Without a clear and compelling Brand Strategy, the ability to reach both the minds and hearts of your targeted audience will falter.

So, how do you become a Brand Advocate?

This workbook will transform the way you think about branding! In each chapter, it discusses the essentials of branding and then invokes the reader to reflect on their current situation. Most importantly, it compels the reader to actively respond to those questions using an interactive approach. The final chapter summarizes answers taken from each section and then creates a roadmap for a successful brand strategy. By working through this process, you will become the advocate for your brand.

What drove me to write this workbook? First, it became evident that a practical branding workbook was not commercially available. Many branding books present concepts and case studies; they provide great insights, but they leave it up to the reader to discern key points and more importantly, don't explain how to apply those ideas. The Brand Advocate will walk the marketing practitioner through the process.

Secondly, I have a personal passion for branding and recognized early on its strategic value. As a result, I've taken my accumulated professional experience and education in this field and condensed it into building blocks that can help you create a powerful brand strategy for your organization. I strongly feel that the fuel of business is the organization and its financial performance, but the engine is the brand itself. Top management would be well served to embrace and elevate branding to a strategic position within the organization. Conversely, those who might choose to ignore the essentials of branding may indeed suffer the consequences.

Great brands take considerable time and patience to grow and nurture. They are not the subject of single, snazzy ad campaigns. Brands also require a systematic, method-based approach to analyze, develop, and execute. This workbook guides the user through these steps and emphasizes execution.

Finally, all forms of promotion possess a tainted reputation since its very impact is uncertain. Whether you employ general advertising or direct mail, your ability to assess its effectiveness is not quantifiable. As John Wanamaker, the inventor of the department store concept once pronounced, "I know that 50% of my advertising is wasted. I just don't know which half."

Instead of measuring awareness or "share of mind," this workbook emphasizes financially based metrics to plan and measure ROI. This approach allows an organization to target opportunities; strategically fund approaches to acquiring business, and provides the metrics to analyze efforts and results. Since this process is ongoing, management can now evaluate different venues and adjust the strategy and spend to produce the most effective returns.

It is my hope that after following these essentials, your organization will enact a more effective and prudent brand strategy. After completing this workbook, you too can become a Brand Advocate!

LET'S GET DOWN TO BASICS

Overview

After eighteen years as a marketing practitioner and having devoured most published books on the subject, it seemed to me that someone should distill the essentials of branding in a simple and concise fashion. This chapter by no means attempts to grapple with that endeavor, but merely consolidates the basics for real-world application. You may want to identify specific topics of interest and further research them to aid in your particular business situation. I'll provide three basic principles to help get you started.

Perception—Principle #1:

It was once said “perception is everything.” Look around you. Everything you own, wear, and touch has meaning on a variety of different levels. The “brand” begins in your mind and directs your actions, purchases, and behavior over a lifetime. The first principle for your business begins with a brand perception. Think of McDonalds™ restaurant. Every aspect of their business adds or takes away from that organization—from the way the food tastes to the empty French-fry carton in the parking lot. Every image your organization presents to the world (from your web site to how you answer your phone) enhances or degrades how potential customers perceive your business.

Value—Principle #2:

What value are you providing? The best way to answer that question would be to simply look at the competition. Take time to evaluate what everyone else is doing. Find the gaps in their offerings and claim that territory as your own. The key question a potential client will ask you—what are you going to do for me today? The answer will inevitably be one of these three things: save them money, remove their pain or conflict, or make them look good (or a combination of all three!) The essential point here—to provide a value that no one else can.

Differentiation—Principle #3

Why do you choose Pepsi™ over Coke™, Total™ over Special K™, or Starbucks™ over Seattle's Best™? In a blind taste test, would you really know the difference? Each product exudes a combination of communication vehicles over time to assure you can tell the difference.

Trying to mimic the status quo only makes your business less distinguishable. In order to stand out from the crowd, you need to be FIRST in a category and possess a unique story to tell. The idea of a coffee house wasn't unique until Starbucks™ created the right combination of product mix, aesthetics, and messages to engender a new platform for coffee enjoyment. Until such time, the average person wouldn't dream of spending \$3.50 for a cup of Joe! One final word—find a niche that hasn't been exploited and create a compelling story (perception).

BRANDING BASICS EXERCISES

Starting with principal number one, your brand doesn't reside on a label, billboard, or website—it resides in every individual's mind. This remains an area, as a business owner or leader, which you can't control. Whether you like it or not, perception rules over your product or service.

Perception may also be unfair. You may have a stellar record with your clients, and through one bad incident, you will have to spend years to trying to remove the tarnish. Remember the Exxon™ Valdez, Tylenol™ tampering, or New Coke™ incidents? On a positive note, when your clients are making key decisions between you and a newcomer, your brand value will have a compelling influence on their decision-making process.

The first step in this process is to sit back and think about your business. List FIVE descriptors that define who you are in a few words.

From your perspective, put into words a perception of what your organization is, can be, or will be in the future. This is a good start, but only the beginning of your situational analysis. Repeat the process with a colleague (don't show them your list). Compare the two. If you are an inquisitive sort, repeat this process by querying a cross-section of your organization. The more data points, the better!

Step One: Your Perception

Step Two: Colleague's Perception

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ |

What's happening here? Are you finding divergent perceptions?

I first applied this method during my final year at graduate school. During the discovery phase of my Thesis, I undertook a cross-sectional brand awareness of an organization and found a wide range of responses. What management discusses in the boardroom will most likely not permeate throughout the organization without a proactive, inter-company communication program. Why are these perceptions not consistent? Even with a concerted effort, it takes time for messages to affect organizational behavior.

The importance of management and the entire organization's agreement on perception, value, and differentiation concerns how the outside world distinguishes you. For example, if you walk into a Starbucks™ and the aesthetics (building, decor, displays, and employee's attire) appear as it should, but if the employees are lazy, unfriendly, and rude, your perception of Starbucks™ shifts. If employees refuse to embrace and carry out management's values, consumers will seek another venue that addresses their needs.

As simple as it sounds, we need to ask ourselves on a daily basis why someone would want to do business with us. In the vast universe of choices, simply offering the same product or service isn't compelling enough.

Try another exercise. Please list below the extraordinary value that you bring your customers on a daily basis. Next, for each value you've listed, write down a similar value your prime competitor provides. Now, compare and contrast which values matches your customers needs and why. We will explore a "Value Gap Analysis" later in this workbook and discuss how to present that ideology to your customers.

<u>Your Organization</u>	<u>The Competition</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Next, let's discuss how you differentiate yourself from all other direct and indirect competitors. What does this mean? Back to the Starbucks™ business model, direct competitors might include Dietrich's™, Seattle's Best™, and other local coffee houses. Indirect competitors are comprised of all other venues such as Dunkin Donuts™, Winchells™, Krispy Kreme™, and even cans of coffee that line the shelves of your local grocery store.

The key to success resides in being FIRST in the minds and hearts of your audience. Differentiation helps them recognize between the two, whether directly or indirectly.

This last exercise will help you think about ways to differentiate your organization from the crowd. List five attributes where you compete on a daily basis in a DIRECT fashion. Try and stay away from price and quality and focus on aspects that your audience will really value. For example, if we are evaluating coffee houses (direct), you may note taste, aesthetics of the store, ambiance, etc. Also consider ways you compete on an indirect fashion. These are comprised of solutions that your audience may substitute in lieu of the real thing. For example, I

may really desire a Venti Latte from Starbucks, but will settle (due to convenience) for a Dunkin Donuts knock-off.

Direct

Indirect

Now that we have covered the “basics.” Let’s move on to what I refer to as the essentials of branding.