



HEY, WHO PUT MARKETING INTO MY OPS & ORG DEV PLANS? BRAND DID!

The Manager Who Thought Brand
Was Just a "Marketing Thing" ...
Doesn't Work Here Anymore.

ORANGE & WHITE PAPER:
No 2 in a series



SAY IT LIKE NOBODY ELSE CAN!™

SCOTT SILVERMAN'S
ARTICULATED BRANDS®





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“There is only one valid definition of business purpose: to create customers.” –Peter Drucker

**“Marketing is not a department.”
–Harry Beckwith, Selling The Invisible**

Costco. Starbucks. Disney. Ritz-Carlton. Talk to most enduringly successful companies and you will hear repeatedly that a primary factor responsible for their sustainable competitive edge is the company culture they built, nurtured and scaled. On one hand, it sounds annoyingly obvious, so obvious, in fact, you'd think everybody would be doing it. But they aren't. They can't. Giving birth to a distinctly valuable, relevant and resonant corporate culture – one that employees, vendors, strategic partners, media outlets and customers will reward with their attention and patronage - is a far rarer, far more difficult task than one would imagine. Cultures rise. Cultures fall. That's history in a nutshell for you. Moreover, the challenge isn't just how groovy a work environment we can create, but how do we create an evolving, aspirational culture that also *answers to the profit imperative?* Ahh, now there's the rub! (In regard to the Drucker quote, customer retention and profitability can be viewed as objectives in support of the primary purpose, a virtuous circle indeed.)

WHEN YOU DIG DEEPER, YOU RESONATE MORE DEEPLY.

But recently, the business world has, in fact, begun to wake up to the power of brand in its larger sense. Companies of every size and industry are asking: if we can hold our creative briefs and our creative executions to a higher standard of consistency and strategic brand adherence, can we not also put parameters in place for all of our initiatives, behaviors, hires, fires, etc.? The objective or ambition couldn't be any larger: working towards making the entire operations our Number One marketing tool... wherein “the company,” typically a plodding noun, becomes an active verb, purposefully customer-creating on a daily, departmental and individual basis. To do so, we must first let go of historical definitions of branding, wherein existing products or services were “prettied up” for consumption. While branding continues to be about skillful perception management, the identification of a strategy that factors in all salient information and company insight from every level stands at the very opposite of superficial.

**“WHEN YOU CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT THINGS, THE THINGS YOU LOOK AT CHANGE.”
–WAYNE DYER**

To get there, a rigorous discovery process will explore the business in-depth, its vision and values, its targets, its low and higher-hanging fruit, its products and services, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, its existing marketing collateral, the positioning of its key competitors, its history and its uniqueness – all of them, not with a singular, internal perspective (group think?), but with a 360° viewpoint that approaches all of these topics with an eye on all potential brand ambassadors and all potential brand audiences. Employees, falling on both sides of the brand conversation, deserve, at the least, a double-weighting. And when it comes to engaging and influencing those closest to the organization, the branding constants of authenticity and values-infused personality become all the more important. Said simply, if they need to tell you “your baby's ugly,” let them. Better them than your clients and prospects, right?



While getting employees involved is always a good branding idea, it becomes even more important when employees show up as one of our most strategic brand audiences.

TIGHTER CREATIVE BRIEFS. BECAUSE IT'S WHERE YOUR BRAND RUBBER MUST MEET THE MARKETING PERFORMANCE ROAD.

On the creative communications side, one point the third-person self-referring brand strategist Scott Silverman is fond of making: a tighter brand strategy and resultantly tighter creative briefs enable us to attach a more profound and more exacting set of marching orders to every marketing dollar. When we begin to incorporate business development strategy, employer branding, employee recruitment, employee retention, employee communications and employee development, now we're talking about attaching that more precise definition and those marching dollars to every organizational dollar! We sure better get this “strategy thing”



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closer to right than not! Hmm... maybe we do have to open ourselves up to deep, robust brand discovery! Because to truly be a “brand on purpose” takes far more than even the brand discovery typically employed for marketing communications. While getting employees involved is always a good branding idea (buy-in, accountability, balanced departmental representation), it becomes even more important when employees show up as one of our most strategic brand audiences.

GREATER BUSINESS AND MARKETING THOUGHTFULNESS. BECAUSE IT'S HOW YOU STEP OUT OF PARITY AND INCREASE YOUR TARGETS' PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR COMPANY'S VALUE.

For Nordstrom's, customer service means one thing. For Google, it means something else entirely. But just saying service is a non-starter. It's tired. It's abstract. And, come to think of it, if you don't have the cleats, should you really be playing Big League Ball? In other words, service, specifically employee service, is the broad question. Putting “committed to outstanding service” into a mission statement is only begging that question and proudly declaring our own non-answer. To find out what service or employee performance means to us, here, now, in this organization, we need to be asking ourselves, our clients, our most likely prospects and our other stakeholders. And we need to be digging deeper and deeper until those answers don't sound like every other company's playbook.

EMOTIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL ALIGNMENT: THE PEOPLE MAKE THE PARTY

There is far more at work here than the HR truths that happy, healthy employees make for more productive employees. Though that's proven perfectly valid, the engagement we're looking for here isn't simply employee dedication, loyalty and hard work. That's good, of course, but a little too abstract to be truly operational and effective. For while a group of employees who arrive every day at dawn and don't punch out till dusk certainly sounds good, simply being a company of committed individuals doesn't attach direction to their activities and certainly doesn't reverse-engineer those behaviors to a pre-defined cultural or customer experience. This is not to say that brand-building is empirical science or anywhere close to

perfect; it is simply a way of helping to bring the CEO's typical 30,000-foot vision down to an accessible level, bringing it out of the abstract and attaching concrete sub-objectives (brand performance output?) to it.

Most assuredly, the vision must be articulated, but there is a critical aspect of that process most forget, omit or simply lack the resources and skillset to do. To be a well-articulated brand, a company must not only speak memorably, compellingly and uniquely but it must have its points well-defined. In terms of mindshare, I like to think of a brand's differentiators and attributes as the stakes that mark the property lines around the real estate we're claiming as our own.



We start seeding the sale by injecting the psychological architecture of it into the DNA of the brand itself.

“EVERY BATTLE IS WON OR LOST BEFORE IT IS EVER FOUGHT” –SUN TZU, THE ART OF WAR

360° branding is a way of looking at The Sale in a way that perceives that Sale, like Sun-Tzu or million-dollar sales producers have known for quite some time, as beginning well before most would commonly construe it. We begin with the end in mind. We start seeding the sale (the transfer of trust, which must also include the ongoing performance and innovation sale which must be made and won daily) by injecting the psychological architecture of it into the DNA of the brand itself. Point blank: this fundamental sales skill set, and the ability to structure a sale across time, is not as developed amongst advertising agencies and creative communicators as one would hope.

To be fair: when companies measure their return on marketing investment, rarely do they factor or prioritize anything other than dollars-in and dollars-out. But Sales is a chits game... as every salesperson knows... moving folks through the sales cycle, gaining points along the way. What is the ROI of a business dinner? Of wearing a suit to that meeting? Of remembering your prospect's birthday? Of adequate active listening? I don't know, either, but I know all of that must be



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... tied to an overall close rate. Keyword: overall. And marketing's effectiveness, especially brand marketing's effectiveness, especially 360° employee-centric branding, must be measured in that same cumulative way.

ASSESSING STRATEGIC FIREPOWER

Will isolated, tactical and immediate measurements *in any arena* ever get us to an assessment of foundational strategic soundness? Of course not. So, then, one may be tempted to ask: how do you assess a strategy prior to its execution? Well, you can't. That would be some other world, a delightfully easy world, and, quite frankly, a place I'd like to visit some day. But as for our world, the one we both occupy, personally, in addition to a thorough assessment of the company's existing brand and an audit of their competitive landscape, I look to breadth and depth as strategic criterion in their own rights: just how many factors were considered, what was the thinking process behind their weighting in the ultimate brand personality and position? Show me the tough choices (precious little is binary in messaging, brand and business diagnostics) and the clarity and consistency behind those choices, and my strategic confidence grows. (Interestingly, this manner of honing in on the conscious choices made or unmade is how I began to decipher between a good brief and a bad brief when all my time was spent copywriting.) Will I always be right? Nope! But here's our saving grace... and I'm asking you to reflect deeply upon this: even an approximate answer to the right question is preferential to a more precise answer to the wrong one (paraphrased, John Tukey).

In this big picture construct, there is considerable overlap between brand planning, strategic planning, recruitment, retention and employee development. We're talking about defining the brand in such a way that employees and other stakeholders can see themselves within the brand and understand how each of the brand's supporting pillars pertain to them directly, with both passion and accountability. How can we expect our prospects and customers to engage with our brand if we, ourselves, haven't personally engaged in its creation and ongoing evolution?

THE 360° VIEW OF BRANDING

A business *is* its message. Who better to both receive that message inwardly and amplify that message outwardly than

a company's own workforce? To say “our people are our most valuable asset,” while true, is also trite and just a wee bit pandering. Just as those who truly believe we exist subject to our market's dictates, those who also believe in human capital do more than pay lip service. They leverage that asset to the hilt, and they most commonly do it by making the brand something larger than all of us. For this is what compels human service. This is what unifies disparate populations and diverse teams.

Everybody knows the best form of marketing for lead quality and often cost is word of mouth. But does it happen by accident? Does it scale? Is the strategic differential sustainable? Essentially, we seek to reverse-engineer an emotional experience that will “organically” lead to employees and customers becoming our brand ambassadors. Southwest Airlines' “Raving Fans” approach did this so well it triggered a whole wave of companies trying to duplicate its success.



To say “our people are our most valuable asset,” while true, is also trite and just a wee bit pandering.

WHEN YOU THINK BRANDING, DON'T THINK MARKETING. THINK ABOUT A COMPANY-WIDE PLAN TO CREATE MORE CUSTOMER CONNECTIONS.

If one looks at “brand” as simply a “marketing thing,” one misses out on the opportunity to exercise some of branding's even more powerful muscles – to arrive at a set of organizing principles, with stakeholder input and buy-in from the get-go, and then to use those principles or pillars as a roadmap or compass with which to fuel, gage and chart employee, department and company progress.

360° BRANDING ISN'T JUST ABOUT AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO CAMPAIGN ROLLOUTS; IT'S ABOUT UTILIZING A MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH TO BUSINESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

The problem is that too many branding endeavors operate at a serious disconnect from other business development, strategic



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and organizational development functions. Most branding agencies simply aren't equipped to dive this deeply or to make sense out of what is essentially a business development exercise. Most companies do not want to expose themselves this fully or dedicate the time and financial resources required for what may appear to be abstract touchy-feely-ness or interdisciplinary chaos. But the experienced brand counselor knows the role isn't one of "happy answer man." That's the old school consulting model. Today, the highest and best use of a brand marketing consultant is that of facilitator and sounding board, a fresh and objective perspective that helps to keep the conversations on track, the myriad variables in check and weighted properly in the final definition of the brand strategy.



ABOUT ARTICULATED BRANDS®

When you want to accelerate the pace of growth, Articulated Brands® specialty is helping you identify the two things that sit at the very core of all marketing and business success: what to say and how to say it best. A twenty-year award-winning marketing copywriter and pragmatic brand consultant, Scott Silverman founded Articulated Brands in 2007 so that companies of every size and industry, including smaller businesses and startups, could leverage the tools and techniques of the big brands.

Operating as a brand strategy, brand development, copywriting and company naming agency, Scott Silverman's Articulated Brands® collaborates with savvy marketers who know increasing performance starts with increasing resonance. With a reputation for digging deeper into a company, its vision and its values, what sets his work apart is his track record for setting his clients' businesses apart.

What do targets want? More meaningful marketing. What do businesses want? Marketing that actually means something. When you want to better connect with those who matter most to your success, there's Scott Silverman's Articulated Brands®. He helps you *Say it like nobody else can.*™

For an uplifting chat about upping your marketing performance, give Scott a call at 310.826.8518 or shoot him an email: scott@articulatedbrands.com.



In an ever-increasingly cynical age, it's not what we say but what we do. It's not just about how well we talk but how well we listen.

TO DIFFERENTIATE, INCREASE FOCUS ON YOUR COMPANY'S "WHY" AND YOUR "HOW." TO DO THAT, LOOK TO YOUR PEOPLE – YOUR "WHO."

If a brand may be defined as a promise to fulfill a need and provide value, a personality-infused and thereby differentiating set of expectations – then wouldn't it make sense that how we fulfill upon that promise, to ourselves and to others, also be informed, directed and measured against that same brand platform? In an ever-increasingly cynical age, it's not what we say but what we do. It's not just about how well we talk but how well we listen. But listening to marketplace needs and engineering and existing in response to them... for that, we're going to need a brand-aligned team. Maybe they should be in on this whole brand conversation. Maybe we need to be just as two-way in those dialogues as we plan on being in our marketplace conversation.

Now, all we've got to do is take out the maybes.



- BRAND STRATEGY
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