



# MESSAGE-CENTRIC BRANDING®: AN INTRODUCTION

The More Definitive Your Brand  
and Marketing Approaches, the  
More Definitive Your Impact.

ORANGE & WHITE PAPER:  
No 1 in a series





## THE MORE DEFINITIVE YOUR BRAND AND MARKETING APPROACHES, THE MORE DEFINITIVE YOUR IMPACT.

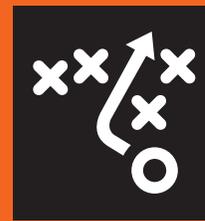
Businesses chase marketing tactics like they're going out of style. But more is not better if it's just more off-strategy marketing. Whether you are marketing a product, service or a company, if you don't get your positioning and your messaging right, you're simply not being nearly as effective as you could be. These tactically-oriented businesses shout at the marketing director to increase incremental performance, but companies that are genuinely committed to accelerating their growth and increasing marketing impact/efficiency choose instead to solve their communication issues at their core. When your business is serious about accelerating growth, don't think marketing. Think message-centric branding® instead. This is to say, begin thinking not only about the "what" of what you are selling, but the "why" and the "how."

Message-centric branding® is an approach to growing your business and your brand, increasing marketing performance and making sure your brand strategy, brand discovery and brand development work are always rooted in your core messages. Message-centric branding® is grounded in position and message because these precious two disciplines sit at the very foundation of sales and business development success. Though often misunderstood and massively underutilized, *position* and *message* are the two tools every business has at its disposal; they're highly leverage-able, exerting a disproportionate influence on your growth rate and your marketing impact/efficiency.

Why do we exist? How does our company go about creating customer connections? How do we deliver a uniquely valuable experience that is both quantitatively and qualitatively different? The purpose of message-centric branding® is to better connect you to your targets and marketplace opportunities by better defining—with greater precision and nuance—what you need to be saying, and how to say it best. By increasing your company's own understanding of how it exists for its customers, you can hone in on the core messages that set it apart. In this way, every piece in your marketing arsenal becomes that much stronger.

Message-centric branding® isn't just for big companies. It's for entrepreneurs and startups, too. It's for anybody looking to forge deeper, more profitable customer connections and for those who previously thought branding was simply a cosmetic exercise or some pie-in-the-sky vision that had nothing to do

with today's bottom line. It may sound easy, but the ability to clearly articulate why your company is uniquely valuable and why targets should care, is incredibly difficult. Often, it takes an objective, experienced outsider to help you recognize both your unique position in the marketplace and how to declare it in a way that gets targets excited. While it certainly requires a lot of up-front energy and investment, it is all designed to get you ahead further, faster. Stronger, more thoughtful choices equals greater target resonance, equals increased marketing performance and accelerated growth.



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**"THERE IS ONLY ONE VALID DEFINITION OF BUSINESS PURPOSE: THE CREATION OF CUSTOMERS." – PETER DRUCKER**

Don't create marketing; create customer connections.

All genuine branding seeks to define who you are, who your customers are, and how you are going to define that overlap. It also seeks to define your points of difference, and how you are going to thrive in a sea of competing messages. In addition to affirming the viewpoint that all successful branding is an outgrowth of successful positioning anyhow, message-centric branding® puts an even greater emphasis on the importance of getting your positioning and core messaging right, and getting them done first. A branding process driven by position and message is more *practical*, more *efficient*, and it fosters greater *strategic adherence* on behalf of your creative communications team.

It's more *practical* because tighter, more nuanced definitions lead to more precise and more impacting customer connections. It's also more practical because it is more readily executable. Too often, companies spend tens or hundreds of thousands dollars on branding initiatives and insights, but the marketing director is left to figure out how to implement and execute those fancy brand strategies.



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It's more *efficient* because often you can leverage the work in the near-term to fuel sales in the near-term, and not just on behalf of building the often more ambitious big-picture brand.

It fosters greater *strategic adherence* because while descriptors such as service, freedom, or purple (!) may begin to crack the surface of your differentiation, they are still too open to interpretation. Message-centric branding® results in tighter creative briefs. Tighter creative briefs result in work that is on-message, on-strategy, and on-brand. The tighter the strike-zone, the more precise your pitch needs to be. By narrowing your communication parameters, you exponentially increase your chances of homerun creative marketing campaigns.

For those who recognize that we are, all of us, in the customer creation business, message-centric branding® is an approach to business development of which the primary objective is to better connect you with those that matter most to your success. Unlike traditional branding, which may at times favor other factors that attempt to capture attention and foster loyalty, message-centric branding® doesn't discount these other elements. It simply says this: the **process** for creating deeper, more profitable target connections is a process better led by position and message.

**IF YOU'RE IN BUSINESS, YOU'RE IN MARKETING.**

Message-centric branding® is a method of viewing your company that puts marketing and sales at the very heart of your company, because if you're looking to accelerate the pace of your business development, that's exactly the place they need to be. Enduring marketing success comes down to the strength of your position and the clarity and saliency of your messaging. When you're failing to create the leads, revenues, and market share you would like, stop blaming your marketing plan, marketing budget, or, for that matter, your marketing director. Ask this: do we resonate with our customers? Or, conversely, did we just jump right into placing ads and running email campaigns?

When you're looking to grow your business, you know you need to increase marketing performance. But you can't increase leads, revenues and market share until you first learn how to increase resonance, your fundamental ability to move your

targets and positively predispose them to buying from you. Unfortunately, most marketing isn't at all resonant. It fails to clearly and cleanly spell out a company's unique value. Most marketing doesn't even capture target attention, so it has zero chance of increasing target understanding or fueling target excitement.

When one sets about creating greater leads, greater revenues, and greater market share, you can't escape these three CORE IDEAS:

- 1) To create greater leads, greater revenues, and greater market share, we need to increase *target interest*.
- 2) To create greater leads, greater revenues, and greater market share, we need to increase *target understanding*.
- 3) To create greater leads, greater revenues, and greater market share, we need to increase *target excitement*.

These three CORE IDEAS are why most marketing fails to perform as expected, because you can't accomplish any one of these objectives very well without first knowing how you're going to create resonance. Resonance, as I've come to define it, is when your corporate communications register with personal meaning. In short, hitting it out of the park is all about hitting home with targets.



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But as any expert salesperson will tell you—or anyone who's tried a litany of costly marketing tactics over the years—resonance, like the Sale itself, isn't a moment in time, but the culmination of a series of well-orchestrated decisions. By helping you identify and clearly define your company's core messages, message-centric branding® puts you on a path toward greater immediate resonance and greater long-term resonance because your strategy for creating increased customer connections has already been spelled out.



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## FOR EVERY COMPANY, THERE IS A MARKETING SWEET SPOT.

When your message resonates, your prospects are more inclined to contact you. When more prospects contact you with a greater inclination, you increase your chances of converting. You close more business. The logic is simple. It's being able to execute on these consistently where you need to rely on proven branding and messaging talent.

## THE ENTIRE BUSINESS, FROM THE CEO AND BOARD ON DOWN, IS LIKE A GIANT GAME OF "TELEPHONE."

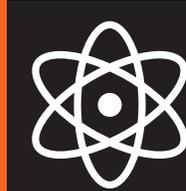
Consider, if you will, two people speaking to one another. The speaker, in his or her head, has an abstract idea of what he or she wishes to impart. Together with gestures and facial expressions, he or she uses words chosen based on vocabulary, prior experiences and associations in effort to get the idea across. Based on these clues, the listener accesses his or her own connections to these expressions, and formulates his or her own idea of what is being said. Anybody who's played the childhood game of telephone knows one hundred percent crystal clear communication is rarely the result. Now, imagine the consequences on your marketing plan and budget when your core messages lack clarity from the outset. It isn't pretty. But do you know what is pretty? Crisp, clean communications and stellar marketing performance by a company that no longer struggles with how to articulate the right message in the right way.

## GREATER BUSINESS THOUGHTFULNESS LEADS TO SMARTER COMPANIES AND SMARTER MARKETING.

To some extent, all branding endeavors harness the virtue of thoughtfulness. Thoughtfulness in the details that inform and qualitatively determine your customer experience enables you to step out of parity, and to elevate your customers' perceptions of value. Extreme thoughtfulness, when defining your positioning and core messages, occurs at an even more atomic level. Even minor adjustments in how you're defining your company at its core yield exponential differences in impact. Even minor course corrections can alter the trajectory of a campaign, the success of a product launch or the long-term health and viability of the company itself.

## MESSAGE-CENTRIC BRANDING® ISN'T A KNOCK ON THE PRINCIPLES OF GENUINE PROBLEM-SOLVING DESIGN; IT'S A CELEBRATION AND DEMONSTRATION OF THEM!

Some may interpret the very term message-centric branding® to be a stab at design, or for that matter, any of the other elements one uses to differentiate and forge a strong marketplace identity. Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, message-centric branding *is* design, when we define design as a tool for solving problems. What is every business' problem? The need to efficiently create more customers!



When defining your positioning and core messages, even minor adjustments in how you're defining your company at its core yield exponential differences in impact.

A fundamental focus on position and message actually supports the creation of even more outstanding strategic design. The business-building value of authentic problem-solving design is undeniable. The power of the experiential—from expert web design, the distinct fragrance in a retail environment, to the tactile allure of standout package design—all of these pack a powerful punch. Others will think message-centric branding® reflects a bias towards voluminous copy, or that verbal branding—the linguistic elements—are more important than any of the other weapons in your brand-building arsenal. But this, too, misses the point. Copy, just like design, and all the other techniques you utilize to invite and engage in customer conversations—these are all *executions*. They are the outgrowth of your message. The minute you get your company's position and core messages down on paper, with strategic thoughtfulness, precision and creative vision, is the minute you turn the corner on profligate, ho-hum, ineffective marketing.

## PLANT THE SEEDS OF CUSTOMER CONNECTION INTO YOUR VERY FOUNDATION.

What business doesn't want greater leads, greater revenues, and greater market share? But for far too many businesses, the word 'marketing' itself has become associated with tactics,



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channels of reach, massive media expenditures, and something we do in the background while we're executing the work we already have, trying to keep quality up, and pursuing our sales in a personal manner. But let us remember: our marketing is supposed to be our force multiplier. A great sales person and sales team are worth their weight in gold. But marketing, when done right, is supposed to let us scale up for efficiency. It cannot do that when there is core confusion around your core messages. It cannot do that when your promotions and other outreach activities have little to do with the company itself. But for the great mass of companies, the CEO keeps marketing at arm's length. For the great mass of companies, marketing operates at a serious disconnect from sales.



### 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](mailto:scott@articulatedbrands.com).



**It's time for marketing to return to its business development roots. It's time to build more sales-think into the very fiber of our brands.**

The world of technology will continue to amaze us with new tools of target reach. But instead of asking yourself what new tool of reach you're going to embrace and finance, let's spend more time asking and answering how we're going to truly reach them, with the power to influence hearts and minds, and that means defining your position and core messages with greater acuity.

### BUSINESS IS HARD. MESSAGE HARDER.

It's time for marketing to return to its business development roots. It's time to build more sales-think into the very fiber of our brands. Audiences that understand what you are all about and get you are more likely to buy from you, and greater interest and excitement on their part leads to an easier sales effort on your part.



- BRAND STRATEGY
- COPYWRITING
- COMPANY NAMING
- DESIGN

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