

WHITE PAPER

How Do You Transform A Brand? Start Here.

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First off, let's get this straight. Transforming your brand is so much more than just changing your logo. In fact, it actually has little to do with changing your logo. Granted, your logo may change as a result of transforming your brand. But transformation is miles bigger than that. Transformation is about how people think and feel about your brand.

Every customer has a very first moment with a brand. Chances are, it is also the defining moment for the relationship between customer and brand—establishing meaning, value, preference, and even expectations. As the

saying goes, "You never have a second chance to make a first impression." Is your brand prepared for that first impression? With every customer? Every day? Probably not. You can't simply create an awareness of your brand in today's marketplace, you must create an engagement with your brand. No longer are you simply looking for your brand to persuade the customer. Today, your brand must serve the customer. Transforming your brand will allow you to do so, but on your brand's terms. Not theirs. And not your competition's.

Start Here

Purpose. What is the purpose of your brand? Is it written down? Do the first two words have something to do with serving, providing, or helping? If not, this is where you start. To acknowledge the innate relationship your brand should have with your customer and how your brand intends to treat your customer is the most important first step towards transforming your brand into a high-performing asset that will do what it promises for your customer. It is why the brand exists. And if everyone in the organization does not understand, respect, and respond to that edict, then whatever promise you make with the customer will never be fully fulfilled.

Part of transforming a brand requires building the ecosystem that will nurture and transcend every facet of your brand's presence—both inward- and outward-facing. An essential element of this transformation and ecosystem building is to get the brand's foundation defined and written with simplicity and a clarity that takes the brand conversation from "you" to "we." Inclusiveness and diversity are not only paramount to building out the brand's message, but integral to successful business practices. "We" supports the purpose of serving, while allowing intelligent conversations to exist between the brand and your constituents. These conversations will ultimately manifest themselves both verbally and visually with the execution and expression of your brand.

The conversations also create and promote a culture that is guided by the brand's compelling truths [pillars]—the three to four attributes that are distinctive to the brand's existence and are reflected in every brand touchpoint. These truths, when applied in a weighted fashion according to the communication goals for a particular audience, form and steer the value proposition for that audience. It will be different from the value proposition for another audience, but at the end of the day, they will all ladder up to the unifying position the brand holds.

In addition to the purpose, pillars, position, and value propositions, you want to explore and define the personality of the brand. This is what will allow the conversation to go from "you" to "we." As part of the 5 Ps of Brand listed below, personality breathes life, tone, and manner into the brand, personifying and establishing character, and setting the stage for transformation.

5 Ps of Brand

1. **Brand purpose**—answers the question of why a brand exists with respect to the positive difference it aims to make in people's lives.
2. **Brand pillars**—the compelling truths of the brand—those adjectives that describe the core beliefs, values, and culture of the brand that must be present in every touchpoint.
3. **Brand positioning**—the strategic intent (aim) or design for a differentiated brand image within a specific target audience—initially manifested through a statement that reflects how the brand is to be perceived by its various target audiences.
4. **Brand personality**—a statement, written in the first person, describing the point of view of the brand. It should define tone and manner of the brand and conjure up imagery of the attitude the brand possesses. It gives us a glimpse into the soul of the brand and the feeling the brand has for life.
5. **Brand value proposition(s)**—the sum total of benefits that a brand promises each different targeted customer segment, based on the order of importance and value of the individual brand pillars, all assimilating back to the brand purpose and position.

Large and small companies have done this. They put their customers first and gave careful thought to the relationship their brand has with them. And how to make it better, more engaging, more transformative. Think of TOMS Shoes. They sell shoes. But they also give shoes. One for One. And their customers love them for it. This doesn't mean your brand has to be cause related. On the contrary, it just means your brand has to stand for something. Getting the foundation right is critical to getting on the path of a brand transformation. But it is only the first step.

Now Do This

Now that you've got your foundation worked out and you know why your brand exists, what it means, and for whom it has meaning, it's time to make it unique, ownable, desirable, believable, defensible, and sustainable. These are the questions you will constantly ask yourself as you visually and verbally unpack and reset the brand. It is these six questions that will distinguish your brand from your competition.

A brand that is a high-performing asset is also a brand that is working for you every hour of every day, interacting with your audiences through every touchpoint available. You want your brand to be evocative, to stir curiosity in both your customers and those you want to attract and engage with. It is precisely this interaction that drives those things. Finding new ways and new areas to create those moments

is what establishes new touchpoints and uncovers hidden opportunities in the brand communication protocol.

Creative solutions help drive the evocative encounter and nurture the cultural exchange between the brand and your audiences. These brand experiences can be in the form of trade shows, interactive market opportunities like industry events, point of sale, or social media. Your website can and should be one of the most expressive touchpoints. As potentially the hub of all brand communications, your website has the unique ability to push content to multiple and various audiences, while maintaining fidelity of brand. It can house testimonials, how-to videos, and positioning papers that confirm your brand as the category captain, as well as be the definitive expression of your brand's personality and character. Not only can you show off your products or services in their best light, you can also control the message, while engaging in intelligent conversation and thoughtful leadership.

Your website can also be a destination for your internal audiences, with daily updates, schedules, accolades, news, and events that affect them and the industry—all geared toward creating and cultivating a culture of brand, empowering each and every associate to be intimate with the brand, and become an ambassador for the brand.

Some other vital areas to think about when transforming your brand into a high-performing asset are technologies such as custom apps that create more authentic and natural interaction with your brand. Make your content as meaningful as possible. Apply some storytelling that further endears the brand to your audience, or share events and news with the public that support the brand's personality and even gives the brand a real face.

A couple of years ago, when Land Rover was about to cease production of their famous Defender line, they celebrated its legacy with a series of viral videos and disruptive events around the world. They even published a "digital adventure story" entitled "The Vanishing Game" by renowned British novelist, William Boyd, with a Defender at the center of the story. It was hugely successful in re-engaging Land Rover enthusiasts to share stories of their own, and also to bring new customers into the fold, entrenching and bathing the new Land Rovers with the imbued heritage of 70 years.

Does your brand have an anniversary or tie-back to history or a new opportunity to celebrate and share a piece of itself with your markets? It doesn't have to be as dramatic as Land Rover's approach. Have a company softball team? Be sure to share the fun with your social audiences.

And be open to new ways of communicating your brand. Challenge your sales and marketing team not to be conventional. Not to stay in lockstep with the marketplace. Challenge the status quo. Your brand will be rewarded for being innovative and thinking outside the box, like Land Rover. Interact with and engage your audiences on their turf. Go where they go, and just "be there." Look for viral opportunities to surprise, delight, or even challenge your audiences.

And be invitational. Your brand is not for everyone. And it shouldn't be. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't provide opportunities for new audiences to experiment with your brand. Make sure you are being relevant, but don't be afraid to try new and different. Today's marketplace is waiting on brands to express themselves truthfully, transparently, and authentically, but differently. You can be a conservative, traditional brand and still be innovative and on the edge. You can be a contemporary, disruptive brand and still communicate a moral compass.

At the end of the day, your brand can and will be a high-performing asset. IF you are engaging with your customers and potential customers through authentic brand experiences. Take every opportunity to share your brand in its best light. By maintaining an alignment between your business goals and your brand strategy through an all-encompassing head, heart, and hand strategy, your brand will demonstrate and provide evidence to your audiences of your intent. Your passion. And your purpose. The brand experiences that you create will become those moments. Those moments that transform your brand and define the relationship your brand will have with your customer. And then you'll know that your brand is a high-performing asset.



MEET JAMEY

As BOLTGROUP's brand principal for over 25 years, Jamey Boiter leads all brand strategy, design, and experience teams. He has been a featured speaker at national conferences and college campuses, a writer on the subject of brand strategy, design, and experience, and a featured blogger for Fast Company. Jamey has served on the Executive Advisory Board for the Charlotte Chapter of AIGA, and is currently serving on the Advisory Board for CPCC Advertising + Design.