



**WHITE PAPER**



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M A R K E T I N G G R O U P

# **Understanding, Nurturing & Managing Brands**

***Delivering on Your Promise***

**[www.CovergeMarketingGroup.com](http://www.CovergeMarketingGroup.com)**

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*Businesses must understand, nurture and manage their brand in order to deliver on their promise consistently.*

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## Understanding, Nurturing & Managing Brands

Regardless of the size of your business, the service you provide or the product you sell, your business has a brand. In simple terms, your brand is the promise you make to your customers. It's what they can expect each and every time they interact with your product or service.

If these experiences are positive and consistent, your brand provides value to your customers driving benefit in terms of loyalty, positive word-of-mouth and, ultimately, sales. If your brand is viewed negatively, your business suffers from lost customers, negative feedback and lost revenue. Because of this, it is imperative that all businesses understand, nurture and manage their brand.

### UNDERSTAND YOUR BRAND

You can make your brand be what you want it to be if, and this is a big if, you can deliver that experience consistently. Consider the local coffee shop that prides itself on serving the freshest coffee around, only to take your first sip and have it taste like it was brewed yesterday. Or the nearby restaurant that promises lunch in 10 minutes, but takes that long to take your order. Both businesses understand what their customers need, but fail to deliver on the promise. Those companies' brands are severely tarnished by not delivering.

Now think of your favorite businesses, the ones you come back to over and over again regardless of other options. The retailer who promises outstanding service and delivers by having a sales associate meet you at the door and walk you through the latest lines.

The grocery store that always has the freshest fruit and vegetables, just like they advertise. The dry cleaner who always has your clothes ready as promised, 24 hours after you drop them off regardless of how busy they are. These companies have earned your trust, because they deliver.

### NURTURE YOUR BRAND

It takes hard work and dedication to derive the full potential from your brand. It requires that you look at all aspects of your business, not just your marketing, to deliver that brand promise.

The prior examples help demonstrate this concept. Perhaps the coffee shop's employees haven't been trained as to when to change the coffee, regardless of how much is left. At the restaurant, the owner may try to save costs by having fewer servers on the clock, resulting in poor customer service. Both of these situations can be overcome, but it starts with making the commitment to align business practices with your brand.

Among the key elements of nurturing your brand is educating, engaging and rewarding employees. As the front line for your company's brand, they must understand what it takes to fulfill that promise with each and every customer interaction. If the front desk attendant at the Ritz-Carlton failed to greet you upon arrival, didn't explain how to get to your room and made you carry your own bags, this would not deliver on your expectations for a five-star hotel.

*continued*



*Manage your brand:*

- Research
- Positioning
- Brand Management Program
- Engage Internally
- Tell Your Customers
- Monitor Your Progress

*Use research to ensure your marketing plan starts with a solid basis. Don't be afraid to ask your customers.*

## Understanding, Nurturing & Managing Brands

Instead, every employee at Ritz-Carlton undergoes extensive training to ensure each customer experience meets their expectations. Employees are rewarded for taking responsibility to make sure this happens. Ultimately, Ritz-Carlton is consistently rated as one of the top hospitality brands in the world.

### MANAGE YOUR BRAND

Your brand can be managed to maximize its potential. These six steps provide the framework your organization needs.

- 1. Start with Research.** Ask the marketplace, look within and know your competition.
- 2. Define Your Position.** Determine what your brand stands for.
- 3. Develop a Brand Management Program.** This formal plan links with the company's vision and mission, aligns internal operations and develops standards.

- 4. Engage Internally.** It starts at the top and management must model the way by demonstrating, educating and rewarding brand behavior.
- 5. Tell Your Customers.** Ensure all marketing elements support your brand, but not until you are ready.
- 6. Monitor Your Progress.** Determining if your brand is on target is an ongoing process and adjustments may have to be made.

### BUILD YOUR BRAND

This high-level overview provides some basic elements for understanding and establishing your brand. The following presentation reviews key concepts that every business should understand when it comes to successful branding.

# What Is Branding?



*Branding is so immense that  
it's everywhere; so important  
that it affects everything.*

- Jonathan Baskin, Author

Branding is a **business strategy** that is communicated both internally and externally, *aligning business functions to support that strategy*, and delivering consistently and long-term.

*Marketing communicates your brand.*



*A brand is the collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer.*

- Colin Bates, Brand Strategist

## What Is a Brand?

A brand is an intangible, but critical component of what a company stands for. In part, a set of promises. A brand implies trust, consistency, reputation and a defined set of expectations.

- 3M = Innovation
- Hallmark = Caring
- FedEx = Guaranteed delivery
- Disney = Family entertainment
- Your Company = ???





*What is most critical is putting the brand at the heart of the organization. This is how an organization differentiates itself from competitors and builds customer and employee loyalty.*  
- Roger Martin, Professor

# Branding Is the Big Picture

- Brands are more than products & services
- Brands are what a company does, what it stands for and what the company is
- Brands are rooted in an organization's mission, vision and values
- Brands differentiate companies from their competition → **Positioning**

**Your Promise**

**+**

**Customer Experience**

**BRAND RELATIONSHIP**



*The best brand identity systems are memorable, differentiated, meaningful, authentic, sustainable, flexible and have value. Recognition becomes immediate.*

- Alina Wheeler, Author

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# What Is Brand Identity?

Often confused with your “brand,” a brand identity is a reproduction or imitation in the form of a graphic, person or thing.

- Graphical representations such as logos and images
- Marketing materials that convey your brand message
- Spoken communication that represents your brand

**YOUR  
LOGO  
HERE**



Your  
Brand's  
Identity



*Brand is the 'f' word of marketing. People swear by it, no one quite understands its significance and everybody would like to think they do it more often than they do.*

- Mark di Soma, Branding Guru

## Benefits of Branding

- Increases awareness and recognition
- Drives repeat business
- Lends credibility to new introductions
- Creates consistency in communications
- Ability to get a premium price
- Empowers & aligns employees
- Simplifies execution/decisions on the job
- Customers are more forgiving of mistakes
- Mitigates damage in unfortunate situations



*Customers must recognize that  
you stand for something.*

- Howard Schultz, CEO Starbucks

# Keys to Brand Building

- Establish market presence
- Make the brand credible
- Communication must be relevant
- Competitive differentiation
  - Emotional Appeal
  - Brand Imagery
- Deliver - over and over

# Branding Success



*A brand is the proprietary visual, emotional, rational and cultural image that you associate with a company or product.*

- Charles R. Pettis, Brand Expert

- Steadfast focus on the core promise
- The discipline to maintain it with consistency
- The imagination to present it in ways that are memorable and motivating
- Incorporate delivery into the normal stream of organizational activity
- Start from the top



*Establishing an emotional benefit for consumers is the transition and translation of the functional benefit into something that consumers can experience emotionally that will leave them touched with the brand's benefit itself.*

- BrandCurve from bizzia.com

# Communications Strategy Framework

- A successful communication message operates at three levels, making your company personally and positively relevant to its stakeholders by linking:
  - Unique and ownable attributes
  - Positive consequences
  - Relevant values and emotions

***Persuade by reason***

***Motivate through emotion***

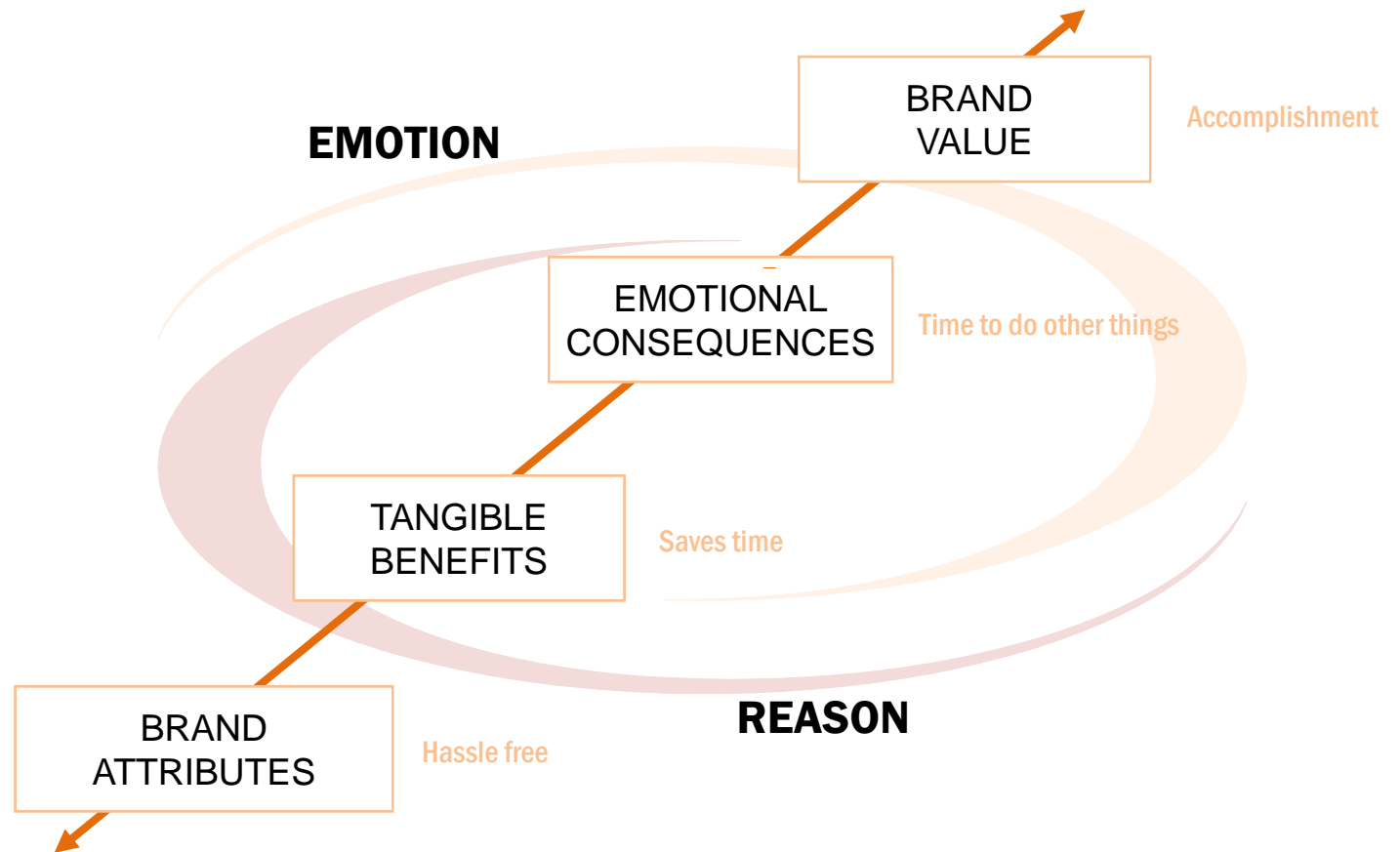


*You can educate consumers on your product's features, but without an emotional involvement of some kind, consumers may not attach value.*

- John Williams, CEO LogoYes.com

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# Communications Ladder





*Ultimately, a strong brand message has a lot in common with a bucking bronco. It's not going to stand still for a second – it has to change constantly as the times and the competition do– but once you've managed to get on top of it, you do not want to let go.*

- David F. D'Alessandro, Author

# Brand Management Process





*A brand that captures your mind gains behavior. A brand that captures your heart gains commitment.*

- Scott Talgo, Brand Strategist

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## Understanding, Nurturing & Managing Brands

This high-level overview outlines key elements to help you understand, manage and nurture your company's brand. Successful organizations use these elements to expand market share, increase sales and improve profitability.

While marketing is an integral part of branding, it is just one component. Branding is intertwined through all aspects of a business' operations and all functions within the organization must support the brand. Marketing efforts are only successful when delivery of the brand is clear and consistent.

In today's competitive marketplace, the bond created with your customers may not be as strong as it once was. Take this opportunity to ensure the promise of your brand resonates with your customers...and then deliver in all you do.

### SOLUTIONS FOR ALL ORGANIZATIONS

Converge Marketing Group provides marketing, advertising, public relations, branding and web solutions for small and medium-sized businesses. Whether it's a brand management program, an advertising campaign, a single project or something in between, Converge Marketing can make your business relevant. When it comes down to it, our philosophy isn't very fancy, but it works: Keep it simple. Be effective. Get it done.

For more information or to discuss how Converge Marketing Group can plan and implement your marketing or branding program, please visit [www.ConvergeMarketingGroup.com](http://www.ConvergeMarketingGroup.com) or call 480.215.0873.

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