

360° Brand Story Building™

Build your story...build your business™



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The Concept

How do we move consumers to act?

In understanding consumer behavior, research is demonstrating that the extraordinary appeal of the most successful brands is based on their mythic qualities – qualities that have moved people to action since the beginning of time, such as self-reliance, freedom, belonging, self-discovery. These brands have become storytellers of these myths through relevant modern narratives which resonate with consumers at a deep emotional level.

Finding and developing an emotionally rich and persuasive story requires hard work and consistency. The challenges are compounded in this technological era of instant information. Consumers watch and talk about everything you do, listen to everything you say, and expect to make a meaningful connection with you. Engaging them in your Story has become more critical than ever to the continuing success of your business.

Developing and managing your brand demands that you fill every part of your organization with the mythic qualities of your Brand Story. It's what we call 360° Brand Story Building™.

This Paper Will Help You

- Engage your customers and your employees at a deeper and more meaningful level that builds enduring bonds and fosters trust
- Enjoy a major competitive advantage
- Stand out in today's crowded marketplace
- Significantly increase the likelihood of improving your business performance



Key take-aways

Here are the key take-aways from this paper. Read the entire paper for more detail and examples.

First...discover your brand story

What is a brand story?

Brand Story is the narrative that, in the telling, portrays the heart and soul of the brand and emotionally connects your brand with the consumer. You use your Brand Story to communicate what you stand for, what you promise, and what your customers experience.

Dig deep for your brand story

Great brand stories start with great research. The purpose of this research is to help you identify the ways in which customers connect emotionally to a product or service category and then to the brand itself. The research uses analytic techniques borrowed from the disciplines of literary criticism, mythography, depth psychology, and educational research.

From brand story to brand promise and personality

First, you identify the Brand Story and then you translate it into the brand promise and personality. The brand promise and personality flow directly from the Brand Story research. All three (story, promise, personality) help the organization to establish and communicate the uniqueness of the brand.

Next...design and execute your brand story

People and culture

Your employees are some of your primary storytellers. Each time they interact with your customers, they have an opportunity to build and strengthen (or damage) your Brand Story. You need to ensure that your processes, procedures, practices, and training communicate your Brand Story. In particular, you need to get your senior executives on board. Employees look to leadership to reinforce the messages and behaviors they are asked to reflect. Fostering the complete engagement between your Brand Story and your employees should be your top priority in your 360° Brand Story building strategy.

Service experiences

Most companies understand the strategic role that customer service plays in the development of effective customer relationships. Even if a product is your core competitive offering, you still provide augmented services such as invoicing, complaints handling, advice and personal attention, information, repair, etc. Each service experience provides you with an opportunity to tell your Brand Story. If your employees have successfully internalized your Brand Story, then you have achieved an ideal platform from which to provide customer services consistent with your Story.



Product and packaging

Like the cover of a storybook, the packaging of your product must compel the consumer to “read the book” and in so doing enter into the Story. Packaging is often the first touchpoint for your customers, and if executed well, it can be a critical trigger to making a deeper emotional connection with them.

Facilities and real estate

Your Brand Story comes to life in the physical facilities where your product is created, sold, served, or delivered. The “front of the house” (the hotel lobby and guestrooms, the retail showroom, the restaurant) are most often the easiest place for your customers to experience your Brand Story. Your physical plant is the tangible setting for the “movie” that customers create in their minds about how they fit in to this setting—how they fit in to the Story. The “back of the house” (the restaurant kitchen, the factory production line, the phone room of a reservation office) is often a forgotten part of your Story. However, these behind-the-scene settings can often make or break the success of the front end delivery.

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability

Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability (CSRS) is a broad-based movement in business that encourages companies to take responsibility for the short and long term impact that their activities have on customers, employees, communities, and the environment. Empirical evidence exists to show that CSRS will have a strong impact on a company's success when its programs mesh with the identity of the company, its brand, its products and the business environment and conditions in which they operate. In other words, your CSRS initiatives need to reflect your Brand Story.

Business partnerships and alliances

When you choose to engage in a relationship with another organization for whatever reason (increased exposure, access to new sales channels, new product development, sharing of best practices, cost containment, etc.), you should consider carefully the potential benefits and liabilities this relationship will have on your Brand Story. Companies maximize their chances of engaging in a successful partnership when their Brand Stories are compatible, and their respective missions, visions, and values are in alignment.

Marketing communications

Over the past two decades, marketing communications has changed. No longer is it about transmitting one-way messages. With today's rich and interactive media, the consumer actively experiences and engages with your brand before they even make their purchase decision. Marketing communications becomes the primary means by which the brand is introduced and experienced. The objective of marketing communications is to inspire an emotional connection with the brand so that the brand lives in the consumer's heart. Your brand becomes the brand for which there is no acceptable alternative.

And finally...

Gain clarity on your Brand Story and what you are relentlessly pursuing. Tell your Story consistently in everything you do.



A few definitions...

Stories, storytelling and brand

Storytelling is getting lots of business press these days. And it's great to see so much conversation about the persuasive power of stories. We've been struck, however, by the varying and valid definitions of brand story and storytelling that are being used in business today. The concept of brand and its related terms also has been variously defined. Since language is so important in communications, here are our definitions:

- **Brand Story** is the narrative that, in the telling, portrays the heart and soul of the brand and emotionally connects your brand with the consumer. The Brand Story needs to be infused into all organizational activities and assets (people, culture, product, packaging, facilities, marketing, customer experiences, etc.). It's the "big S" story.
- **Brand history** is the founding and evolution of the company. Many brands view their story as merely their histories. Though perhaps interesting, this is not the "big S" story.
- **Brand experience** stories are the personal stories that consumers tell about their experiences with the products and services. These stories are very desirable outcomes from effectively infusing your organizational activities and assets with your Brand Story.
- **Brand:** The single concept that you own inside the mind of the consumer that is built through the brand image and the brand experiences.
- **Brand Promise:** The unique and differentiated benefits that are relevant and compelling to the consumer.
- **Brand Personality:** The way the brand speaks and behaves to provide richness and texture in terms of human qualities and characteristics.

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First...discover your brand story

What is a brand story?

Your Brand Story creates the powerful and virtually unbreakable emotional bond that turns customers and employees into avid brand advocates.

Your Brand Story expresses the heart and soul of your brand and emotionally connects you with your customers. Think about the Brand Story for Nike, one of the most successful manufacturers of sports gear. Nike is successful because it doesn't just sell sports gear. It sells a persuasive and emotionally rich and value-laden story: a story of hard work, sweat, and perseverance—the perseverance associated with doing our very, very best. It is a story that is incredibly persuasive because it entices consumers to participate—*Just Do It*[®]—in a personal quest for excellence and fulfillment.

Imagine the scene as the 6,284th finisher crosses the line of the Boston Marathon. Her name is Nancy and a year ago she lost her job and watched her self-confidence plummet. Instead of giving in to self-pity, Nancy decided to train for a marathon. Out of shape and nervous, she nevertheless persevered. At the end of her first marathon, she is spent and exhausted, but in her mind's eye Nancy is no less a champion than the first place finisher.

Nike did not just provide Nancy with great running shoes. Through the consistent communication of its Brand Story, Nike facilitated her participation in a larger, age-old story—a story that hundreds of thousands of customers revisit daily as they lace up their running shoes or head out onto the links. The Nike story, as exemplified by the personal story of Nancy and her Boston Marathon, is a story of achievement through effort and its subsequent rewards. The Nike story also connects people to a uniquely American story: Success goes to the persistent, the hardworking, and those willing to struggle today to reap tomorrow's reward. The Nike story bonds consumers to the brand in a way that escapes competitors such as Adidas and New Balance. The Nike bond is a cult-like bond that is difficult, if not impossible, to break.

Nike's communications in the form of ads, promotions, and spokespeople along with the name itself—Nike, goddess of victory—consistently reiterates the Nike story again and again.

Your Brand Story gives meaning to who you are and what you do. Your Brand Story unites your employees with a common purpose and connects them with the customers they serve. You use your Brand Story to communicate what you stand for, what you promise, and what your customers experience. Your Brand Story provides the foundation for your most fundamental business decisions and is the meaning at the heart of all your messages. Your Brand Story creates the powerful and virtually unbreakable emotional bond that turns customers and employees into avid brand advocates.



Dig deep for your brand story

Great brand stories start with great research.

A quick Internet search of companies reveals that many companies view their Brand Story as a version of their company histories. Interesting as these histories may be—and often they are very compelling—they fail in their primary purpose, which is to emotionally connect people to the brand.

We're not talking about corporate storytelling here. Your Brand Story is not the history of your organization's founders, although your founders' story and your Brand Story may indeed share similar elements. We're talking about a story that connects you with each customer deeply and personally. At its very best and most powerful, your story transcends time, culture, and location because it speaks to those ageless and unchanging truths about the human experience—birth, death, growing up, growing old, kinship, struggling against all odds, etc.

That's the story that needs to be told through everything you do.

Great brand stories start with great research. The purpose of this research is to help you identify the ways in which customers connect emotionally to a product or service category and then to the brand itself. The research uses analytic techniques borrowed from the disciplines of literary criticism, mythography, depth psychology, and educational research. Consumer stories about you are first “deconstructed” to identify the common patterns in the narratives. The goal is to discover the recurring themes and the broader patterns that go beyond the day-to-day routines of consumers and speak to the more fundamental experiences of the human condition—love, loyalty, friendship, commitment, etc. In Nancy's story of the woman running the marathon, we identify with her experience of struggling against impossible odds, of transforming herself through hard work and determination, and of increasing her self-confidence.

In the analysis of the consumer stories about your brand, look for recurring emotions, symbols, imagery, and events and then compare those to documented cognitive, mythic, and archetypal patterns. Through the expert analysis and interpretation of these stories, you can better understand the patterns, themes, words, phrases, and symbolic images that connect everyday stories to ancient and timeless myths and archetypes. These mythic stories and archetypes trigger powerful and deep-seated emotions. You can then build on this mythic foundation to create an emotionally compelling Brand Story—one that forges enduring bonds between consumers, employees, and the brand.



From brand story to brand promise and personality

The brand promise and personality flow directly from the Brand Story research.

First, you identify the Brand Story and then you translate it into the brand promise and personality. The brand promise and personality flow directly from the Brand Story research. All three (story, promise, personality) help the organization to establish and communicate the uniqueness of the brand.

For example, Harley-Davidson's Story is about the rule breakers who choose to make their own paths. These strong-willed rule breakers are rebels and outlaws who stand up for what they believe in. They challenge the world as we know it. They are individually motivated. They represent a release of pent-up passions. They are aware of limitations in society and they set out to break the rules and challenge conventions. They feel the excitement of being just a little bit "bad." They stand out because they do not conform to the normal.

Harley-Davidson's Story can be told from the point of view of many different people. The lawyer escapes his high-stress job to experience the freedom of the open road. The young man needs to define himself as someone who stands out from the crowd. From each manifestation of this Story flows Harley-Davidson's brand promise—the pursuit of freedom.

The Harley-Davidson brand personality is then consistent with the Story and the promise. Harley-Davidson is:



- Fierce individuality
- Rebellion against things that are unjust
- Different
- Innovative
- Fearless in the face of danger
- Brave
- Seeking a better life
- Free spirited
- Wild
- Seeking escape
- Adventurous

By building their Brand Story, their brand promise and their personality into everything they do, Harley-Davidson has maintained brand loyalty for over 100 years. Customer relationships, market-defining products, and extraordinary customer experiences are the keys to their success.

Here, briefly, are a few ways in which Harley-Davidson continues to infuse their Brand Story into their organizational activities and assets:





- Product: The Harley motorcycles themselves offer a more powerful look, sound, and feel than their competition. Harley-Davidson uses more traditional components than the competition and has retained many characteristic design elements over time in an effort to maintain the purity of the Brand Story.
- Partnerships and Alliances: Reflecting the individuality of the Brand Story, Harley-Davidson's dealer network programs are customized to individual stores worldwide.
- Corporate Social Responsibility: Harley-Davidson is very involved in community and philanthropic efforts such as Monies for Miles for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.
- Customer Experiences: Harley-Davidson maintains a commitment to building a brand community through the Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.), a group of passionate consumers organized around the lifestyle, activities, and ethos of the brand. This group is an extended family of riders who fulfill their dreams of seeking thrills and excitement as they discover new landscapes and broaden their horizons.

Isn't it ironic that Harley-Davidson, the great rule breaker, is doing the best job at sticking to the 360° Brand Story Building rules?



Next...design and execute your brand story

Once you discover your Brand Story and, from that story, articulate your brand promise and personality, you have the platform upon which you can build your brand and bring it to life through every aspect of your business.

360° Brand Story BuildingSM

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The following sections of this paper provide examples of how companies are building and living their Brand Story through:

- People and Culture: the employee hiring, training, retention, involvement, and communications practices you use.
- Service Experiences: the design and delivery of all the primary and auxiliary services you offer.
- Product and Packaging: the tangible offering to your market that fulfills customer needs and wants.
- Facilities and Real Estate: the operational setting and physical structures where your offering is sold and/or serviced.
- Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability: the initiatives you use to take responsibility for the short and long term impact your activities have on customers, employees, communities, and the environment.
- Business Partnerships and Alliances: your relationships with other companies with assets and capabilities that you need but do not wish to develop internally.
- Marketing Communications: the traditional, digital, and social narrative platforms you use to spread your message.



People and culture

Your employees are some of your primary storytellers.

When employees love and believe in what they do, they expend extra effort, give up their spare time, take responsibility for the company and promote it to the people they meet. Your employees are some of your primary storytellers. Each time they interact with your customers, they have an opportunity to build and strengthen (or damage) your Brand Story. Fostering the complete engagement between your Brand Story and your employees should be your top priority in your 360 ° Brand Story building strategy.

In leading storied companies, management will deliberately promote a culture consistent with their Brand Story. At Zappos, the hugely successful online shoe, clothing, and accessories retailer, CEO Tony Hsieh lives and breathes his passionate philosophy on People and Culture:

"...our belief is that if you get the culture right, most of the other stuff — like great customer service, or building a great long-term brand, or passionate employees and customers — will happen naturally on its own. We believe that your company's culture and your company's brand are really just two sides of the same coin. The brand may lag the culture at first, but eventually it will catch up. Your culture is your brand." ¹

A close look into Zappos will quickly reveal it is a fun company to work for and a company that works hard at being fun. Zappos is young at heart, challenges conventional job settings, verges on the zany and is constantly encouraging freedom of expression in its employees. The Zappos Brand Story incorporates the qualities of generosity, care, and humanitarianism—of the importance of people helping people. For employees, being Brand Storytellers for Zappos stems from their own pride in being part of a more noble idea: that of forging stronger communities through human kindness and connecting to a higher purpose than just making profits. The employees help to build a different kind of company by sharing with customers this emotional connection to a higher purpose.

Zappos' core values flow directly from their Brand Story and are widely promoted internally and to their customers:



- Deliver WOW through service
- Embrace and drive change
- Create fun and a little weirdness
- Be adventurous, creative and open-minded
- Pursue growth and learning
- Build open and honest relationships with communication
- Build a positive team and family spirit
- Do more with less
- Be passionate and determined
- Be humble



Providing the human resource processes, procedures, practices and training that reflect your Brand Story is critical to effectively engaging your people in your Story.

All employees are trained well on these values and encouraged to embrace and spread the story. To ensure the propagation of Zappos' Brand Story into their culture, Zappos initiated a unique and effective two-tier employee hiring and training process which involves two interviews. The first interview determines the candidate's relevant experience and technical ability. The second interview determines if the candidate is a "culture fit" for the company. During an intensive four-week training program, new employees learn the company history, the importance of customer service, the long term vision of the company, and the philosophy about the company culture. At the end of this program, new employees are offered \$2,000 to quit if they do not feel they are a good fit. This "reverse reward" seems to successfully weed out candidates who do not feel committed to the company culture.

Those who stay on are rewarded with an unusual and inspiring level of autonomy along with the creative freedom to "treat others as they would be treated." Zappos employees answer all calls without the use of scripts and help each customer on an individual basis without the constraints of cookie-cutter rules and regulations. The communication environment at Zappos is exceptionally accessible. Even the executives sit at open workstations in "Monkey Alley" immediately adjacent to customer service workstations. A steady stream of daily events and happenings around the office, staff blogs, social media, and other activities encourage employees to interact with each other. Zappos understands that their people represent their Brand Story and they invest accordingly.

Engaging your people in your Story is critical. You need to ensure that your processes, procedures, practices, and training communicate your Brand Story. In particular, you need to get your senior executives on board. Employees look to leadership to reinforce the messages and behaviors they are asked to reflect.

To communicate effectively with your employees, you need to go beyond posters and employee publications and instead create opportunities for your people to participate in directly. For example, you can involve your employees in product development and customer experience design. By so doing, you make your employees an integral part of how your company manifests its Brand Story.

The ubiquitous nature of today's technology is such that if you do not manage your people and culture, dissatisfied customers, unhappy suppliers, and disgruntled employees will very likely use social media to tell a story of your company that does not serve you.



Service experiences

Service experiences are an opportunity to tell your Brand Story through how you deliver these experiences

Most companies understand the strategic role that customer service plays in the development of effective customer relationships. Even if a product is your core competitive offering, you still provide augmented services such as invoicing, complaints handling, advice and personal attention, information, repair, etc. Each service experience provides you with an opportunity to tell your Brand Story. If your employees have successfully internalized your Brand Story, then you have achieved an ideal platform from which to provide customer services consistent with your Story.

Few industries have had the competitive challenges experienced by the airline industry. Southwest Airlines, however, has been able to beat the odds, in large part by focusing on customer services experiences. And their success has been measurable. Since 1971, share prices have risen steadily and have almost fully recovered to pre-2008 financial crisis levels in the first quarter of 2010. Southwest has grown to be the largest US domestic carrier by total passengers, carrying over 101.9 million passenger in 2008 on over 1.18 million flights.ⁱⁱ



Since 1971, Southwest has been passionately telling their customers that they “LUV” them. The mission of Southwest Airlines is dedication to the highest quality of customer service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and company spirit. This company spirit is at the core of Southwest’s Brand Story—the story of people who love to play and to enjoy themselves. The people in Southwest’s Brand Story thrive on standing out and thinking innovatively. They hate boredom and love versatile communications. They turn negatives into positives and can get away with “pushing the envelope” just a little bit.

The Southwest Airlines Brand Story personifies the desire for change by encouraging people to break out of the box. The company encourages all of their employees and their customers to join together and enjoy the ride—to be impulsive and spontaneous. Southwest Airlines is in the business of helping people have a good time. Their Story celebrates people who are not afraid to step off the edge and begin new adventures. The emotional connection that Southwest Airlines makes with their customers is that “we’re all in this together.”

If you have ever flown with Southwest Airlines, you’ll definitely recognize the following Brand Story characteristics and values:

- Fun-loving: Southwest Airlines is well known for the jokes, contests and songs that its flight crew (including the captain) share over the intercom at different points in the flight.
 - Heard on Southwest Airlines just after a very hard landing in Salt Lake City: The flight attendant came on the intercom and said, “That was quite a bump and I know what ya’ll are thinking. I’m here to tell you it



wasn't the airline's fault, it wasn't the pilot's fault, it wasn't the flight attendants' fault.....it was the asphalt!"

- Innovative: Southwest Airlines has consistently been standing out and thinking innovatively since its founding: no seat assignments, no baggage transfer to other airlines, no meals, a point to point route system, most tickets issued directly by the airline.
- Versatile communications: Southwest Airlines' proactive customer service initiative contacts customers within 24-48 hours following an incident to apologize for unseen problems on flights or with travel scheduling. The communication is unique to each flight experience, acknowledges the situation, apologizes for the experience and invites the customer to fly again with Southwest. 70% of customers who receive proactive communications return to the airline and bring others with them.

Southwest Airlines has differentiated the customer services experiences in ways that are consistent with their Brand Story. They are successful because they break the mould, while at the same time carefully cultivating relationships with their customers that foster strong brand loyalty and repeat usage.

Product and packaging

Product and packaging are the illustrations of your Brand Story.

What are product and packaging? They are the tangible manifestations of your Brand Story. They elicit emotion, both positive and negative. They have physical or operational attributes which can satisfy or frustrate. They are the illustrations of your Brand Story.

Research over the past decade reveals that consumers make product-buying decisions based on the cultural relevance of that brand to their own story – their own identity. As consumers search to define themselves, they seek products which hold reflections of their own values and which include them in a larger community. Products which fully embody their own Brand Story connect with consumers at this profound level.

Like the cover of a storybook, the packaging of your product must compel the consumer to “read the book” and in so doing enter into the Story. Packaging is often the first touchpoint for your customers, and if executed well, it can be a critical trigger to making a deeper emotional connection with them.

Your product likely sits side by side with the competition on the same shelf or the same street or the next click away on the internet. Ideally, one look at, or experience with, your product and its packaging will elicit a range of positive emotions that connect to and reinforce your customer's self-image and cultural goals.



To achieve this level of success in product design and packaging, the product must be on trend and remain culturally relevant as it moves through time. Some product and packaging become so integral to the Brand Story that it achieves the kind of iconic status which demands that it remain the same for generations. Think of McDonald's golden arches or Tiffany's blue box. Other products demand a constant check on what resonates for the target market at any given moment in the evolution of the marketplace. Think of car companies and cellular phones.

Maintaining the integrity and consistency of your Brand Story is of crucial importance. For example, Nature's Path breakfast cereals had its true genesis in the late 1960's, although the brand name and its products did not exist until more than 20 years later. Beginning with their Lifestream organic supermarket in 1971, Stephen and Ratana Arran embarked on a mission "to sell delicious, wholesome foods grown and processed in harmony with nature." At the time, their business resonated with the hippie counterculture of Vancouver, Canada. The food was revolutionary and anti-industrial. Lifestream became a recognized brand of natural foods and in 1985 launched Nature's Path breakfast cereals.



Nature's Path has grown stronger over time, continuing to innovate and reinvent its products and packaging. The key success factor is that Nature's Path has never strayed from its Brand Story. It still represents the counterculture trend which has been building momentum since those early days and is now a global movement. Nature's Path Brand Story is about a community of people who passionately identify with the small, fiercely independent farmer who works for the health of people and the planet in the face of Goliath's industrial agriculture and the globalization of food. Nature's Path has positioned itself as a defender and a warrior for the little guy—and for liberty and self-determination.

Can all of these qualities be embodied in a box of breakfast cereal? Absolutely! Each product offers organic, delicious variations of more commercially recognized brands. Nature's Path customers can defiantly pass up the Kellogg's Corn Flakes in favor of Mesa and chuck the Cheerios in favor of Heritage O's. Each cereal box shares a passionate, informative, and feel-good story about the origins of the ancient cereal grains and organic ingredients, why eating these ingredients is ethical and why they are good for you and for the planet. The story tells you that "you can eat well and do good" at the same time. This story resonates for so many people who, in their own lives, wish to stand firmly and independently against big industry and defend their right to buy and consume good, clean, healthy food.



Facilities and real estate

Facilities and real estate is the setting where your Brand Story comes to life.

Your Brand Story comes to life in the physical facilities where your product is created, sold, served, or delivered.

The “front of the house” (the hotel lobby and guestrooms, the retail showroom, the restaurant) are most often the easiest place for your customers to experience your Brand Story. Your physical plant is also the tangible setting for the “movie” that customers create in their minds about how they fit in to this setting—how they fit in to the Story.

Amanresorts, one of the premier luxury hotel companies in the world, continually delights its guests with special places that embody their Brand Story of the nomad and explorer who seeks deeper cultural meaning. Amanresorts carefully weaves place and time with sensory experiences to deliver on their Brand Story.



Through their experiences of unique, exotic destinations, exquisite indigenous architecture, authentic local foods and carefully programmed amenities that reflect the local culture, Amanresorts guests connect with their inner explorer. Each resort offers an authentic “stage” on which guests can perform their personal versions of the story in a way which matches their vision of themselves as privileged but humble wanderers of the globe.

Amanresorts cultivates the appreciation of simple beauty through the use of extraordinary locations, indigenous materials, local staff, and intensive, intimate service for a few very privileged guests. Amanresorts was one of the first resort companies to offer private villas to their guests so that they could experience the location in a very exclusive way that made them feel as if they were embarking on their own very special exploration.

Amanresorts is achieving iconic status as a hospitality brand. It has become representative of the qualities to which its guests aspire—the Story they want to live. Within the hospitality industry, Amanresorts guests are referred to as “Amanjunkies” and they are very loyal to the Amanresorts experience.

While the front of the house is where your guests live your brand, the “back of the house” (the restaurant kitchen, the factory production line, the phone room of a reservation office) is often a forgotten part of your Story. However, these behind-the-scene settings can often make or break the success of the front end delivery.

In a relatively short period of time, Starbucks has become a successful international brand. In his book, Howard Schultz, Chairman and CEO of Starbucks, talks about how the need for a third place in the lives of people helped propel Starbucks’ popularity:

“In an increasingly fractured society, our stores offer a quiet moment to gather your thoughts and center yourself. Starbucks people smile at you, serve you quickly, don’t harass you. A visit to Starbucks can be a small escape during a day when so many other things are beating you down. We’ve become a breath of fresh air.” ⁱⁱⁱ





When Starbucks Coffee originally entered the auto drive-thru market, they appeared to abandon their brand promise to serve coffee to customers in a social environment that gives them a sense of belonging. Furthermore, Starbucks' operational systems and physical plants were not designed to accommodate the functionality required to deliver truly efficient and fast drive-thru service. More importantly, the customer experience at Starbucks' locations with down-market, mass drive-up windows was discordant with the aspirations of those customers. It did not match their image of themselves. Even Starbucks' leadership had some reservations.

However, with the growth of Starbucks' mass appeal, drive-thrus became just one more way to offer their product to their loyal followers, and by 2005 more than half the new locations opened in the US included drive-thrus. The nature of brewing custom espresso drinks still does not lend itself to speed, but the facilities programming is improving. As discordant as the drive-thrus may feel to Starbucks' original brand promise, the evolution of the brand is allowing a new chapter in the physical experience.

To program your facilities in a way that tells your Brand Story effectively, you need to coordinate customer and employee interaction with the physical plant at every touch point. How does your physical facility look, act, taste, smell, sound, feel? If you can deliver a sensory experience in both the front and the back of the house that exemplifies your Brand Story, you have created a winning stage for building a loyal following for your brand.

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability

To make a difference for your business, your CSRS initiatives need to reflect your Brand Story.

More than ever, consumers consciously and deliberately choose to do business with companies that are good, honest, and trustworthy. And they are also increasingly active and vocal in communicating their choices and making their feelings known via social media. Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability (CSRS) is a broad-based movement in business that encourages companies to take responsibility for the short and long term impact that their activities have on customers, employees, communities, and the environment.

Empirical evidence exists to show that CSRS will have a strong impact on a company's success when its programs mesh with the identity of the company, its brand, its products and the business environment and conditions in which they operate. In other words, your CSRS initiatives need to reflect your Brand Story.

Perhaps no company has done more to fully integrate CSR and sustainability into the very fabric of its organization than Patagonia, the southern California-based clothing and gear manufacturer founded by the legendary mountaineer, surfer and crusader Yvon Chouinard. The mission of the company is to "build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm and use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis."





Patagonia's Brand Story is about nobly championing and defending worthwhile causes. Patagonia is about people who are active, self-reliant and genuinely committed to making the world a better place. Patagonia inspires us to overcome challenges and make tough choices: planet first; company second.

Patagonia's CSRS initiatives reflect and embrace their Brand Story:

- Patagonia co-founded 1% for the Planet to donate one percent of sales to grassroots environmental groups.
- The Common Threads Recycling Program allows customers to return specific old or worn-out Patagonia garments to be recycled into new Patagonia garments.
- The Footprint Chronicles, an interactive mini-site within the Patagonia Web site, allows customers to track the impact of a specific Patagonia product from design through delivery.
- Patagonia is converting to using only organically grown cotton.
- Each year, the company campaigns to help publicize and pass legislation on environmental issues.

Truly innovative companies are extending their good works, good will and their Brand Story by going beyond the traditional definition of cause-related marketing. Organizations which conceive and then integrate their CSR and sustainability program from the perspective of the consumer have a wonderful opportunity to expand and extend their Brand Story.

Executed correctly, a CSR and sustainability program will confer honesty, authenticity and credibility on your brand. Customers will perceive your organization as one that is genuinely committed to the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit. A genuine commitment to a CSRS strategy that stays true to your Brand Story plays an essential role in building a sustainable brand and business for the long haul.

Business partnerships and alliances

Companies maximize their chances of a successful partnership when their Brand Stories are compatible.

Your brand—and the emotional connections it makes—can be one of your most precious and enduring assets. When you choose to engage in a relationship with another organization for whatever reason (increased exposure, access to new sales channels, new product development, sharing of best practices, cost containment, etc.), you should consider carefully the potential benefits and liabilities this relationship will have on your Brand Story.

The most important questions to answer in determining whether or not to engage in a partnership are:

- Will the partnership reinforce, enhance, and/or enlarge your Brand Story?



- Will the partnership advance the emotional connection between your brand and your existing customers?
- Will the partnership help to attract new customers you might not otherwise be able to acquire on your own?



Companies maximize their chances of engaging in a successful partnership when their Brand Stories are compatible, and their respective missions, visions, and values are in alignment. Take the partnership between Apple and Nike, for example. The two companies created a meaningfully differentiated offering by combining an iPod, iTunes, or iPhone with a pair of Nike+ shoes and a Sport Kit or Sensor. The consumer uses the Apple product as a workout manager and monitor and can even send workout data to Nikeplus.com and connect with others to set goals, compare results and challenge friends.

This partnership works because the Nike and Apple Brand Stories are complementary. Nike's Brand Story and Apple's Brand Story both embrace risk and mastery and address a core desire to have a special impact on the world. Both companies create superior products that empower their customers to bring out the very best in themselves. Nike inspires us to triumph through courageous and difficult physical action. Apple inspires our creativity and motivates us to make a difference through disruptive and revolutionary thought and action.

Taken together, these two Brand Stories increase the already strong emotional connections both companies make with consumers. The dramatically enhanced synergy from the combined product innovation has significantly enhanced the user's experience which in turn has increased the user's level of engagement and deepened the emotional connection with both brands.

When it comes to partnerships, don't 'just do it'...instead 'just do it right'. Start by taking a holistic, 360° view of your Brand Story and that of any prospective partner.

Marketing communications

With today's rich and interactive media, the consumer actively experiences and engages with your brand before they even make their purchase decision.

Over the past two decades, marketing communications has changed. No longer is it about transmitting one-way messages. With today's rich and interactive media, the consumer actively experiences and engages with your brand before they even make their purchase decision. They begin to shape and fit the Brand Story to their unique personal context during the research phase of the purchasing process. Marketing communications becomes the primary means by which the brand is introduced and experienced.

The objective of marketing communications is to inspire an emotional connection with the brand so that the brand lives in the consumer's heart. Your brand becomes *the* brand for which there is no acceptable alternative. Over time, your most loyal and passionate customers become a tribe of brand evangelists who are profoundly and emotionally connected with your brand.





Consider Jack Daniels, a brand that has attained iconic status thanks to its Tennessee roots, its 150+ years in business and its instantly recognizable square bottle with its black label and the signature Old No. 7 graphic. The Jack Daniels Brand Story is about the Common Man, the regular guy or gal who is down to earth and simply wants to connect with others. Everything about the Jack Daniels story communicates a sense of a less complicated, more innocent time—a time when the values of self respect, self-sufficiency, individualism, pride, hard work, and determination prevailed. The story also speaks to the indelible bonds of family, brotherhood, and kinship. The brand's emotional connection to consumers is "I'm okay just as I am."

The marketing of Jack Daniels is brilliant because of its ability to be both timeless and relevant, and appealing to adult drinkers of all ages. This is a brand that is never boring. The brand lets you know right away that Jack Daniels does things its own way. The emotional connection to the brand is reinforced and enhanced through a variety of both traditional and online activities.

- The Jack Daniels Facebook page counts over 427,000 fans. There are 15,000 Followers of Jack Daniels on Twitter. The company is a sponsor of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, Professional Bull Riders circuit and their World Championship Invitational Barbeque held in their hometown of Lynchburg, Tennessee.
- Jack Daniels welcomes younger adults and Latino adults into its fold through the implementation of various creative initiatives. For example, Studio 7 and its companion site Desde1866 feature talented artists from across the country in exclusive-access shows. Another initiative is the development of an online tool that lets its registered users mix (distill) their own songs from a library.
- A major component of the Jack Daniels marketing plays perfectly to its Brand Story—that of taking personal responsibility for your actions by drinking responsibly. Their Story tells us that their product is made with care and attention and time and so therefore you as a drinker should exercise the same care and attention while taking your time to enjoy the drink—sip by sip.

When your marketing communications becomes a catalyst that lights your Brand Story fire, you set yourself up for long-term success. You will be regarded as genuine, credible and authentic. You will be meaningfully—possibly radically—differentiated from your competition and you will clearly stand out in the most important place of all—the hearts of your customers.



And finally ...

*You have not told
your Brand Story
unless you have
created meaning
for your audience...
meaning that
emotionally
connects you to
them.*

Clarity. Consistency.

Gain clarity on your Brand Story and what you are relentlessly pursuing. Tell your Story consistently in everything you do.

You have not told your Brand Story unless you have created meaning for your audience—meaning that emotionally connects you to them. You meaningfully differentiate your organization when you forge emotional connections with customers and employees who are inspired and shaped by a compelling Brand Story. This level of differentiation is even more important today with the explosive growth of social media.

When you discover, design, and execute your unique Brand Story you will:

- Engage your customers and your employees at a deeper and more meaningful level that builds enduring bonds and fosters trust
- Enjoy a major competitive advantage
- Stand out in today's crowded marketplace
- Significantly increase the likelihood of improving your business performance

And perhaps most important of all, you will begin the process by which you become an iconic brand in the hearts of your customers—a brand for which there is no acceptable alternative.

Build your story and you will build your business.



About the authors

The authors are successful entrepreneurs and business consultants. Their complementary skills and experiences help clients with effective 360° Brand Story Building™.

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Contact us

We welcome your comments, questions and suggestions. If we can assist you with your 360° Brand Story Building™, we hope you will contact us:



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End notes

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ⁱⁱ Wikinvest™ on-line summary of sources, including Southwest Airlines Fact Sheet.

ⁱⁱⁱ Schultz, Howard (1997). Pour Your Heart Into It. New York: Hyperion.

