

EIGHT STEPS TO BUILDING A 'DESIRED' BRAND

A formal process provides the solid foundation. One objective is to control those factors that will influence your brand's ROI. BY LEE SUCHARDA III

Many marketers lack a formal plan for creating or maintaining a "desired brand"—one that stays top-of-mind with consumers over the years.

Case in point: At a recent branding seminar, 70 people were asked whether they had a formal process for introducing or repositioning their brands. Just one hand was raised.

A desired brand creates value and continuous cash flow. But without a process for getting there, new brands often fail and repositioning efforts fall short of expectations.

How do you build a desired brand?

By using focus groups that check the existing branding and packaging in a category, you can identify key visual equities to retain on packaging. This enables you to understand the "visual vocabulary" of your category, and it helped shape the current array of packaging in deodorants.

It requires a well-planned, ongoing effort. The best results occur when everyone in the value chain works with what they really know rather than with what they think they know.

That's where developing a formal process is invaluable. A process guides you to the critical insights that help team members involved in package creation to "stack the deck" in the brand's favor.

Influence your ROI

Start by thinking about how to design a process that helps you control the factors that will influence a brand's return on investment (ROI). Focus on what consumers want.

Marketing is a battle of perception, not product. All else being equal, a better-branded, packaged and positioned product will have a higher ROI.

Your process needs to manage the controllable factors that influence ROI. To do this effectively, you'll need to enlist a team of experts.

Research the backgrounds of your current creative and research partners. Understand where the majority of their revenue comes from (hint: this will be where they are most highly trained). Then, align their expertise with your needs.

Once you establish your team, include everyone early on in the process. Hold regular meetings and rely on your experts to help you design the process.

All this takes time, research and creative execution. It is an investment, not an expense, but it will pay dividends for years.

We've established the value of having a desired brand, identified the



factors we are trying to manage and determined who should be on the team. Now let's look at the process for building a desired brand.

It can be broken down into eight steps. While implementation could require at least six months, the rewards may be well worth the effort:

1. Product/concept research

Start with the product. Refine the idea and get it in front of consumers. Probe on how they use and purchase the product, what they like and dislike about yours and the competition.

What would they do to make it better?

Consider whipped yogurt. Consumers wanted a creamier, textured yogurt. By adding air to the product, yogurt marketers can deliver that texture and charge more at retail for value-added yogurt.

Yogurt marketers deserve to benefit for asking consumers what they wanted. As long as "air prices" remain stable, they should continue to do quite well.

2. Package-check research

In addition to asking consumers about the product, conduct focus groups that check the existing branding and packaging in the category.

These groups should identify key visual equities that should be retained and help you to understand the "visual vocabulary" in considering a category. They should also assist you in understanding the limitations and deficiencies of current packaging in the category.

Deodorants offer one example. Dove may score high on uniqueness while Secret may score high on product effectiveness.

Include team members in the research. The result will be a better product and a good understanding on how to position it.

These first two steps of research will also help you nail down the quality, features and price elements that you can control to manage your brand's ROI.

3. Positioning/strategy formulation

Now that your product is ready, shift your focus to creating a brand.



FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE A BRAND'S ROI INCLUDE:

1 Quality. Marie Callender's and Banquet compete in the frozen meal category, but use branding and packaging to position themselves at two distinctly different quality levels. Marie Callender's uses calligraphy, a cameo illustration, romance copy, a fanciful product description and a painstakingly stylized food shot to communicate an upscale feel. In contrast, Banquet offers the Meat Loaf Meal and a free game of bowling.

2 Features. Quaker uses resealability to add functionality and ensure freshness. Clorox made bathroom cleaning less intimidating by inventing a delivery system that does not require disposal of a bucket of dirty water and a rag. Heinz redesigned its ketchup bottle to better accommodate its upside-down, refrigerator door-use pattern.

3 Price. Ghirardelli markets 6.9 ounces of caramel and chocolate in a different packaging structure and product form for \$3.19. Nestle uses a less expensive structure and offers 12 ounces of chocolate and caramel for \$3.39.

4 Competition. Cereal brands compete in a crowded environment, where as many as half of all brands go unnoticed. All else being equal, the product with the best quality, more desirable features, the lowest price and least competition will have the higher ROI.

To do this, take what you have learned from both the product and the package-check research and develop strategies that position the brand in the consumer's mind.

You want to differentiate your brand in a meaningful way, to communicate in a basic and powerful way

and be different from the competition.

Did you notice that you didn't come up with strategies and positioning before you went to product research? You waited to hear how consumers felt about your product relative to the competition.

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4. Initial branding and packaging concepts

Once your strategies and positioning have full agreement across the team, let them guide your branding and packaging development.

A kickoff meeting is essential. Review the research findings and the

Keep in mind you are building your brand in the minds of consumers. The only way you are going to find out what they think is by asking them. Packaging deserves the investment of time and money because:

- Everyone buying or considering a brand will be influenced by

Keep in mind you are building your brand in the minds of consumers.

competition. Then explain how you chose the positioning and strategies.

Allow enough time for questions and set realistic deadlines that allow for plenty of creative time for your design firm to explore and prepare about five concepts of the primary display panel of your package.

5. Design guidance research

Since you are attempting to build your brand in the mind of the consumer, you should once again return to research to help select the two or three packages that are the most viable.

This qualitative research will accomplish the following objectives:

- Gather consumer reaction to a range of creative options.
- Uncover the communication of individual packaging elements.
- Determine each design's ability to deliver against the objectives.
- Identify the two or three most viable designs.
- Offer insights for enhancement.

6. Branding and packaging revisions

At this point, it's time to gather the team again to review findings and outline revisions to the two or three concepts that remain. Set a completion deadline for revisions and research materials, and schedule "design selection" research.

By now, you may be wondering why you've spent so much time and money on branding and packaging research.

its package.

- Packaging is more permanent than other marketing tactics.

- Packaging competes side-by-side in a very competitive environment.

- Packaging can add value to both the brand and the product by appealing to a different segment, adding convenience or making it desirable to those with an "on-the-go" lifestyle.

Heinz redesigned its ketchup bottles to mirror how consumers really use them: upside-down.

Simply Grillin made it easier to include vegetables in a cookout, while Columbo built a spoon into the lid for consumers who wanted to eat yogurt while on the go.

7. Design selection research

Now, it's time to make a selection. Design selection research is quantitative and will assess the two or three proposed designs relative to the communication objectives, competitive packaging and category norms. It will also provide the following knowledge:

- Shelf impact and label readership.
- Shelf and label recall.
- How the category is shopped.
- Aesthetic appeal.
- Packaging attributes.
- Product expectations and brand imagery.
- Price perception and purchase interest.

The outcome will be a recommended design direction and sug-

gested further enhancements.

You now have valid, reliable consumer perceptions to guide your decision and make further adjustments to your branding and packaging efforts.

In essence, you have in hand what consumers have identified as their most desired option for your product.

You have stacked the deck in your favor simply by having a process.

8. Implementation

Before you're ready to launch your brand, you'll need to add time to extend the winning concept to other SKUs in your line, complete prepress work and print, fill and distribute the new packages.

There are implications to implementing a process to build desired brands. The two major areas that need to change are communication and budgeting. You'll need longer lead times to get through your process and introduce more effective packaging.

You may need to dedicate \$100,000 to branding and packaging development that you previously allocated to the ad budget. Fight for the extra \$100,000 you may need. Spend \$9.9 million on advertising instead of \$10 million to assure you are reaching consumers with the brand they want—a desired brand. **BP**

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REPEAT THE PROCESS

Resist the urge to rest on your laurels after completing the eight-step process to building a desired brand.

Strong brands remain strong because their creators challenge them constantly.

Even after your new packaging reaches the store shelves, continue to evaluate your product, branding and packaging. Evaluate against and be ready to respond to changing market forces.

If you don't, you just may be the next brand that needs to be turned upside-down.